THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

J. M. STIFLER

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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PREFACE

This is not a commentary. It does not undertake to explain the meaning of the words inscribed by Luke. It assumes that their meaning is already sufficiently obvious. Taking the book of Acts as it exists, this work attempts to trace out the course of thought, and to account logically for all that Luke has written. The question continually before the author has been, Why was this said? The facts are plain. What were they intended to teach?

This explanation shows in what sense this book is called an Introduction. It is not concerned with the time or place of the writing of the Acts. It touches no questions outside of Luke's document except as that question is directly related to the historical facts given. The author of the book of Acts wrote with a purpose. That purpose is herein sought.

It has not been thought best to cumber these pages with learned notes and references, lest the book prove more difficult than to read the treatise that is here explained. As far as possible, involved sentences have been avoided. Technical terms have been shunned. It has been a study to

write an exposition of Acts that could be read with profit without consulting other books.

The King James' version is the basis of this Introduction. But this has been constantly compared with many others, the Revised version, Noyes', T. S. Green's (Twofold New Testament), American Bible Union version and with the renderings in the commentaries. All the standard expositors have been consulted. They have been serviceable in ascertaining the meaning of the text; but, with the exception of Baumgarten, they do not specifically keep the course of thought in view.

The original text has been studied with all care, but questions of criticism are not frequently discussed. Only such as materially affect the course of thought are treated at length. But doubtful passages are generally noticed, and what is believed to be the correct reading is indicated.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Rev. Robert Cameron of Denver, Colorado, who read this book in MS. and made many valuable suggestions.

J. M. STIFLER.

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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

SECTION I

The Preliminary Chapter, Acts i. 1-26 3

SECTION II

The Gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts ii. 1-41 14

SECTION III

The New Community, Acts ii. 42-47 23

SECTION IV

The Apostles Refuse to be Directed by the Council and find a Spiritual Guidance, Acts iii. 1—iv. 35 33

SECTION V

The Sacredness of the Church, Acts iv. 36—v. 16 . . . 43

SECTION VI

The Divine Endorsement of the Apostles as Authoritative Teachers, Acts v. 17-42 49

SECTION VII

The Church Superior to its Internal Difficulties, Acts vi. 1-7 55

SECTION VIII

The Broadening of the Church in the Sphere of its Work, Acts vi. 8—ix. 43 58

SECTION IX

Preparation of the Church for the Admission of the Gentiles, Acts x. 1—xi. 18 81

SECTION X

Development of a New Religious Center, Acts xi. 19-30 . 96

SECTION XI

The Church in Conflict with the Religious State, Acts xii. 1-24 104

SECTION XII

The Evangelization of the Gentiles formally Begun, Acts xii. 25—xiv. 28 112

SECTION XIII

The Conditions of Salvation for the Gentiles Settled, Acts xv. 1-35 128

SECTION XIV

The Gospel in Triumphant Conflict with Heathenism, Acts xv. 36—xviii. 22 147

SECTION XV

The Baptism of John in Contrast with the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, Acts xviii. 23—xix. 7 178

SECTION XVI

The Birth of the Purpose to Evangelize the World, Acts xix. 8—xxi. 16 189

SECTION XVII

The Gospel Rejected by Jerusalem finds Refuge in the Roman Castle, Acts xxi. 17—xxiii. 35 210

SECTION XVIII

The Gospel Rejected by the Jews is Forced to Appeal to Rome, Acts xxiv.—xxvi. 232

SECTION XIX

The Gospel on the Way to Rome, Acts xxvii.—xxviii. 10 . 258

SECTION XX

The Gospel Reaches its Intended Limit, Acts xxviii. 11-31 275

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is not only the central figure in history, he is its source. Without him the course of events from the first century to the present time cannot be explained. Judea has given the world the men, the literature and the institutions which have made it.

The book of the Acts is a very brief history. It covers only about thirty years. But it is doubted whether any other thirty years in all the world's centuries have seen such marvelous social and religious changes—changes, too, accomplished without war and without any serious shedding of blood. Every hope, every sentiment of patriotism and religion bound the Jew to the law of Moses. That law was never more scrupulously observed than in this very period when it lost its divisive power. It had been a wall between Israel and the Gentiles. The latter lay in the soddenness of their sin, despising the descendants of Abraham, and being themselves heartily despised in turn. Nothing but the power and presence of Jesus can account for the coming together of these two diverse elements on the common level of the church.

When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven he left no church behind. He left no commands for organizing a church. In his instructions there was noth-

ing directly involving the idea of an assemblage of believers from all nationalities, with no common bond but fraternal love, and no ruler but himself. To be sure he twice mentioned a church, but there was nothing but the mention. His hearers could not understand its significance. They were far from understanding much that he taught. Any one of the twelve who might sit down to reflect on his moral obligations after the cloud had received Jesus out of sight, would find that these were just two: first, he must himself be a true, holy man, loyal to Jesus, and, secondly, he must preach the gospel. The heavenly knowledge which Jesus' ministry imparted went far beyond mere duties. That knowledge gave comfort, insight, life, but not the idea of a church. Neither before his ascension nor after it did Jesus teach the disciples to organize a church. Their one public duty was to bear witness to his resurrection. He made the church himself. It is his own creation. And the book before us shows the series of acts by which the church was formed and brought to its perfection.

The book of Acts naturally falls into a number of concentric sections like the circles that mark the yearly growth of a tree. Each new one includes all that went before it. These sections mark the successive stages of development in the church from the beginning to the end. A careful tracing out of these is necessary to a proper understanding of the whole.

SECTION I

THE PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

Acts i. 1-26

This first chapter of the Acts is introductory. It shows the condition of things at the moment when the new era is about to dawn. Before Mount Moriah was yet crowned with the first temple, which was to be "exceeding magnifical of fame and of glory throughout all countries," (I Chron. xxii) David said to the youthful Solomon: "Behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord." The material of gold, iron and cedar wood was gathered and ready. But it lay in unorganized mass, and was not yet erected into a house of prayer.

David's Son in much trouble had prepared for the spiritual house. By his teaching and his sacrificial death there were now in Jerusalem one hundred and twenty souls meet for the new order of things. Before Luke begins this history, however, he mentions a number of details whose study shows not only the character of the disciples at this time, but also the character and plan of the book itself. It connects itself intimately with the gospel, but it is neither an appendix nor a complement of it. Luke's former treatise needed no such addition, for he

declares that it is an account of "all" that has gone before. It is complete in itself, giving an outline of Jesus' history from his birth to his resurrection and ascension. That these last two should be mentioned here again is at first perplexing, but the purpose of their repetition soon discloses itself, as we shall see.

The gospel gives the whole story of Jesus' career on earth, but the earthly manifestation did not end, it only commenced his career. Hence the very first verse of the Acts discloses the object of this second writing: "The former treatise have I made of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." The emphasis is certainly to be placed upon the word began, showing that now we are to trace the further activity of Christ from a point at which the gospel leaves it. He is the principal, the only agent. If the emphasis were on the word Jesus, the view to be taken of the book before us would be quite different. We must then understand that while Jesus undertook a work, his disciples now carry it on. We should have a transfer of agency, and must make them the principal figures in the book and allow Jesus only a secondary place. It might be replied, however, that the book is not called the Acts of Jesus, but the Acts of the Apostles. If he is the directing force in these pages, why this title? In answer it must be said that one of the oldest manuscripts (Sinaiticus) calls the book simply Acts. Little weight can be attached

to this, however, for the mass of testimony is for the longer title. And this longer title must be interpreted by the contents of the book itself. It gives the acts of but a few of the Apostles, and that not as agents but as instruments. With the exception of Peter, no one of the twelve occupies much space in the story, and most of them none at all. Stephen is a more striking character than any of the rest of the original number. Moreover, to have called the book what it really is—the Acts of Christ or of Jesus—would have been inappropriate. Such a title would have better befitted any one of the gospels. The book is the Acts of the Apostles because they were used to carry out the will and the spirit of the enthroned Christ.

The book then is a book of acts. It is a history of striking deeds. It shows how things new in God's guidance of his people were brought to pass and established. We get a decided hint of this, too, in this very first verse. The former treatise was of all that Jesus began to *do* and to teach. This second book will show what he continues to do and to teach. Like the gospel story, then, it is a book of mighty deeds, as well as of wondrous speech. Jesus was a doer there; he is the same here. And his deeds would seem to have the foremost place. In the disposition to exalt his sayings and to explain the miraculous character of his works, it must not be forgotten that it is his saying that he is to be believed for his works' sake (John

x. 25; xiv. 11). The latter have the chief place, and to understand the book before us the eye must be fixed on what Christ is about to accomplish by means of all that is said and done. This first verse is in large measure the key to the book.

The phrase "until the day in which he was received up," marks the terminus of the earlier story, and the exact beginning of the present one. There are other repetitions of the former treatise, but none without significance. We know from the gospel that Jesus had his own chosen disciples, and that he had instructed them. But the mention of this fact here shows for the first time the special aim in their selection and training. All along, Jesus had intended them not only for good men and good preachers, but also as instruments of the new work which he was about to do. Of their sole relation to this work the gospel gave no hint. And that Luke now mentions the resurrection (v. 3) again after detailing it so fully in the gospel—what else can he mean than to set forth that which is to be the specific office of the twelve? We knew they were to preach. Now we know the theme of their preaching—that he that was dead is alive forevermore.

In commanding them to remain in Jerusalem (v. 4) they are taught that the new activity is to begin there, that it is his will that it should begin there. For, let the reason be what it may for the presence of these Galileans in the holy city just at

this time, they would, even without his instruction, have remained until Pentecost. But now they know that they are to tarry for a higher purpose—to realize the Father's promise. Jesus had taught them no little about the Holy Spirit. Now he gives them in the comparison with John's baptism a hint of the exalted character of the new realm which they were about to enter by the Holy Spirit. In this comparison, there is both a likeness and a difference. The likeness is that there was in both cases a baptism, an overwhelming. But the difference was threefold. First, in John's baptism the element was water, now it is to be the Holy Ghost. The entrance into that which is natural was to be followed by an admittance into that which was spiritual. And, strange as it may sound, the baptism was to be into a person. Secondly, in John's baptism the element served once for all. The recipient came out of it and was done with it. But in the baptism about to be administered from heaven the element became a permanent condition, and the recipient remained in it. Lastly, in John's baptism men were placed among the penitents. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost men are brought into vital relations with all that is in the spiritual kingdom, (Eph. i. 3) especially its Head. If in John's baptism there was a breaking with sin, in this of the Holy Ghost there is a union with God in Christ.

The question asked by the disciples after the

resurrection—"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—serves to set forth both the present feelings and thoughts of the disciples, and the deferred but not changed purpose of God in reference to the Jewish nation. Plainly the twelve had no thought above the expectation of their times. During Jesus' ministry they looked for the restoration of the lost supremacy of Israel, and for a deliverance from Rome's domination. The terrible scenes of the crucifixion and the infallible proofs of Jesus' resurrection had not altered the current of their hopes. They were still ignorant of the great aim in Jesus's life. They were living on a very low plane. They looked for nothing but a carnal, worldly kingdom with a carnal, conquering head. If these hopes had been dashed by the crucifixion, they were revived by the resurrection. In Jesus' answer to their query he does not deny the validity of their hope, but declares that the time for its fulfillment is placed in the Father's own right. He thereby intimates that the supremacy which once pertained to Israel as a nation, was not to be restored now. A certain kind of power had belonged to Israel for the maintenance of national leadership in the earth. That power had left them and their national supremacy had long since ended. Now, however, a new body is to be called out with a new kind of supremacy and a new kind of power for its administration. That body should be the channel of grace, and the in-

strument of witness in the world. The power enabling this body to proclaim the grace, and to bear testimony to the person and work of the Lord, was the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The disciples are not only ignorant, they are weak, but what was the character of their weakness? It could not have been either mental or moral, and to say that it was spiritual does not convey a very definite idea. Their natural abilities were good, and they had an experience of three years of training under a Master who knew how to teach. The use of this word "power" is clearly indicative of the new state of things just at hand. It also suggests the thought that the twelve had not received up to this time that which was necessary to qualify them for their future work. They had already preached the gospel of the Kingdom. They had cast out demons, and the direction for that kind of service had been full and clear. (Matthew x.) But for the work on which they were about to enter they needed much more than their former training had brought to them. The Holy Spirit coming upon them conferred this additional energy. If they still remained members of the old visible kingdom, it was a kingdom without the power that had once belonged to it in its dominion and government. They were now brought into fellowship with Christ, made members of his body, and partakers of his spiritual power. If he had disappeared from their eyes, he had come by his

Spirit into their hearts. (John xiv. 23.) The truth which had lodged in their understandings through the teachings of Christ became a living force now. They were guided into truth (John xvi. 13), and its essence was love. The Christ who died for the world lived in them. The love which led him to die for the world would lead them to live for the good of the world. He was himself the power which they needed, and in them he would go forth himself to save the world. Instruction alone, even the very best, and with a pupil never so earnest, cannot qualify for the ministry. The twelve had much precious teaching. They were devoted to the Lord as few have been since. They were ready to enter upon the service, but as yet they were unfitted for its duties. They must be endued with power from on high. Before they spoke a word, took a step, or in any way undertook to carry out the last commission of the Master, they must patiently wait and pray in Jerusalem until this promise became a personal experience.

The ascension is again mentioned, but with some additions. The repetition in this connection shows at once that henceforth Jesus will work from on high. The results of his work will be seen on earth, but their source is in heaven. In the word of the "two men in white apparel," spoken to the disciples gazing into heaven, there is not only the comfort that he will come again, but also a quiet reminder that meanwhile these gazers must

begin their work, a work which is to continue until Jesus is again manifested. At once they set about it. If at this point Luke thinks it worth while to inform the reader how far the place of ascension was from Jerusalem, or rather how near, "a Sabbath day's journey," about six furlongs, it must be that he intends to convey the idea that the ascension was virtually from the holy city itself. It was within the sacred precincts. Jerusalem was the center of all that was new.

The historian now leads us to the upper room where the new activity is so soon to come to a focus. The catalogue of the disciples' names is once more given, and some other persons are mentioned, that we may know precisely who had the honor of participating in the advent of the Spirit. It is pleasant to learn that Jesus' own brethren had finally accepted him as the Messiah, and were now among the company, awaiting the promised blessing from heaven. Mary, whose name is not mentioned again in the New Testament, was there with other women. This fact, though given in a word, is not without deep meaning. The daughters of Israel had not shared in John's baptism. They are to have full share in that of the Holy Spirit, so that already we may anticipate Priscilla and the four virgins of Philip's household in their service for the Lord. That all this company was moved to continuous prayer for ten days, shows that the promise of the Spirit had made such an

impression upon them as was not felt before. The ascension of Jesus must have moved them profoundly. They are convinced now that the Holy Spirit is coming. And together they prayerfully await the hour.

At some time during this ten days' delay they fill the breach made in the apostolic company by the defection of Judas. It is just at this point that the number of the names is given. This bit of information is very significant. Peter's primacy did not qualify him to appoint Judas' successor. Even the eleven had no such independent authority. The whole number of one hundred and twenty participated equally in this act. But how they came to the conclusion that the vacant apostolic chair must again be occupied, is not so obvious. As Jews the number eleven would be intolerable to them. In their full number they saw a correspondence between the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus himself must have led them to think of such a correspondence (Matt. xix. 28). In reflecting on these things Peter would naturally recall the Scripture which guided them and guided aright. Matthias is scripturally chosen. In Peter's speech we find the death of Judas detailed in a way that appears to conflict with Matthew's account. But do verses eighteen and nineteen belong to Peter's discourse? Are they not interjected here by Luke to justify Peter in what he said and proposed? As to the conflict with Mat-

thew, that must be left to the commentaries. In Peter's declaration that one must be "ordained to be a witness with" them, we learn precisely the apostles' conception of their own office. They had something specifically different from the rest of the one hundred and twenty, and from all others, but that difference did not consist in lordship. While all were to some extent witnesses to the truth, the twelve were chosen and qualified witnesses of the resurrection. They were instrumentally founders of the church in truth, but not its rulers. And whatever may have been the power of the keys, that power could not transcend this—their own definition of their office—witnesses.

Only two were set forth for the suffrages of the rest, because, no doubt, no more were found with the qualifications named by Peter. This whole chapter is Jewish in its character. This appears nowhere so clearly as in the fact that they cast lots to learn the Lord's will. This is the last time that the use of the lot is found in the Bible, for henceforth the disciples have the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

SECTION II

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts ii. 1-41

In studying the first chapter of the Acts, altogether the most difficult section of the book, we have attempted to account for the presence of each statement. A commentary would go further and justify the presence of every word. By no other means than the former can this or any other book of the Bible be explained. Nothing is said without a purpose, and when that purpose is ascertained the book lies open before us. Its secret is ours.

The advent of the Holy Spirit is second in importance to nothing but the first advent of Christ. God gave his Son that he might also give the "other Comforter." In the section before us Luke means to show not only how impressively the second gift was bestowed, but also what a change it wrought in the hearts and understanding of the twelve. The latter is the main point. Pentecost's day is well on in its course. The disciples are in the upper room in the condition in which the first chapter describes them, without strength and without guidance for anything further. The moment is like that in the history of creation when the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon

the face of the deep—like that moment when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." The created material was delivered from the black pall, and beamed forth in its place in the shining heavens. The disciples were the material fitted by Christ's own hand. The light now dawns on them, it gives them power and guidance, and they find at once the orbit which God intends them to pursue in the spiritual realm.

Is there significance in the day in which the great event occurred? The appropriateness of Jesus' death at the Passover is easily recognized. There must be the same in the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. To us in this late day this question seems scarce worth answering. But to Jews, who lived and thought in an atmosphere of rites, especially to the devout among them, the day of the Spirit's advent would be instructive. Its fitness would strike them. The paschal and the Pentecostal festivals, as described in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, required each an offering to the Lord from the harvest field. These offerings had marked differences. At the Passover there was a sheaf to be presented; at Pentecost, two loaves of bread; the sheaf cut off and offered just as it grew, the loaves prepared. The sheaf was vicarious—"accepted for you;" the loaves were not so. The sheaf was brought before the Lord without a sin offering, the two loaves were accompanied with one. There was no leaven at the Passover; the

Pentecost loaves were baked with leaven. Jesus—the sheaf cut off, presented for the sins of Israel, without leaven, for he was sinless, and without a sin offering since he was that in his own person—was offered to God at the Passover. But the one hundred and twenty—who, like the loaves, were prepared, and like them were not vicarious, but had sin in them, the antitype of the leaven in the loaves—were offered to God at Pentecost. If the wave-loaves needed a sin offering to make them acceptable, so did this company in the upper room need the mediating mercy of Jesus Christ, for they were sinners. In the gift of the Spirit there was involved the divine reception of the believers in new relations, and it is this reception which shows the day of Pentecost the fit one for its accomplishment.

The outward marks of the Spirit's presence were three. They were so decided that none could mistake them. They were supernatural. There was the sound of a mighty wind, though there was no wind; there were the tongues of flame, each of the hundred and twenty being crowned with one; there was the speaking in foreign tongues, which so astonished and confounded the crowd of devout Jews assembled from every quarter of the Roman empire. These miraculous tokens had their own meaning. The sound of a wind was indicative of the pervasive, life-giving power of the Spirit. It was not the frightful noise of a hurricane, narrow

in its range, and destructive. The fire spoke of the Spirit's purifying energy, and the tongues of the practical intent of his presence. The Spirit made those who received him witnesses to the truth. The audible sound brought the multitude together, but the tongues of flame the crowd apparently did not see. This particular manifestation most likely was not of long duration, and disappeared before the company descended, as we must assume, from the upper room to the court below. But that these Galileans, known no doubt by their dress and general appearance, could speak in many different languages, is made certain by the testimony of the men of the many different nations who heard them. The mixed multitude tried to account for the phenomenon, but utterly failed.

The internal marks of the Spirit's presence are as convincing as these miracles. Unlike the latter, they appeal not to the senses, but to the understanding, and are to be discovered in the transformation wrought in the disciples. What courage, what self-possession, what power it must have required in Peter and the rest to stand up before the thousands in Jerusalem in the character of instructors. It was months later, after the disciples had gained experience in public speaking, that they for the first time are compelled to address the great council. Despite this length of experience, the august body is astonished (Acts iv. 13) to see the freedom or "boldness" with which Peter and John

can speak. For the council perceived that the men were devoid of training and of humble rank. It was these men who unhesitatingly stand forth that morning in a presence in which even a Wesley or a Spurgeon might tremble. They confidently take the position that belongs only to the accredited religious leaders. To be sure they had had a little experience. Jesus had sent them forth once, (Matt. x), perhaps twice (Luke x), to proclaim the good news. But in this earlier mission, that was at most of but a few weeks' duration, how different the circumstances. Then their Master was alive. Now they are alone. Then their message was a welcome one—"the kingdom was at hand." Now the message was an impeachment of the nation. Then they went abroad in their own home province. Now they are in Jerusalem, which has killed their leader as a malefactor. That Peter, who had hitherto shown no little inconstancy, not to say cowardice, could now stand up and speak to this hostile mass—he addressed the hostile part first —is to be accounted for only as he accounted for it, by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Christian eloquence is not a gift of nature, but of grace. Piety is necessary to the best oratory.

But when Peter's address on this morning is studied, we have still more convincing proof of the Spirit's presence. In its adroitness, in the arrangement of the arguments, in its analysis, in its steering clear of Jewish prejudices, in its appeal and

effect, it is without a peer among the products of uninspired men. As an example of persuasive argument it has no rival. The more it is studied the more its beauty and power are disclosed. And yet it is the work of a Galilean fisherman, without culture or training, and his maiden effort. The analysis is perfect. He begins with a brief defense and a scriptural explanation of the phenomenon of the tongues (vs. 14-21). His argument for his theme is threefold: first, Jesus is proved to be the Messiah by his works (v. 22); secondly, by his resurrection (vs. 23-32), and, thirdly, by the outpouring of the Spirit (vs. 33-35), when the conclusion is reached in verse thirty-six. The analysis can be represented to the eye thus:

I. INTRODUCTION { 1. Defense. 2. Explanation.

II. THEME—Jesus is the Christ.

III. PROOF { 1. Jesus' Works. 2. His Resurrection.... 3. The Gift of the Spirit. { a–Quotation from David. b–Exposition of quotation. c–The disciples are witnesses.

In marshaling these arguments there is great skill. The theme, The Messiahship of Jesus, which, of course, was in Peter's mind from the first, is not announced until the very close of the address. It was distasteful to the hearers. To announce it at the start is to secure its scornful re-

jection at once, or at the very least to awaken prejudices that will harden the mind against the arguments in favor of it. But at the close it comes in irresistibly, supported by all its proofs. Who taught the provincial fisherman this bright piece of oratorical wisdom? How was it that when he first mentions the distasteful name of Jesus he calls him a "man," and does not declare him to be the Christ until he has proved him such? What guided him so that he did not at the start turn the attention of his hearers from that wondrous phenomenon which had won and held them—the speaking with tongues? Again, the order of his threefold argument shows masterly skill. His first one is drawn from the acknowledged facts of Jesus' life—"as ye yourselves know." His second is from the Scriptures. His third from the wonder now before them, the gift of tongues. He puts the strong argument first, the one least appreciated, because most difficult, in the middle, and the most impressive one last. Who taught the unschooled Peter this perfection in argumentation? It implies a metaphysician's knowledge of the hearer's reason and feeling. He knows just how the auditor must be addressed to be won. Beethoven could not play on the pianoforte with more masterfulness than Peter shows in touching the many keys in the human heart.

Again, how did Peter miss the pitfall of the novice in not making in this address a great deal of his

own personal experience? Proof of this kind is powerful in the right place and person. A John may begin his epistle with "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." A Paul may tell the story of his conversion again and again. And, pre-eminently, Jesus may come to men with the words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Peter had seen and heard and handled Jesus after his resurrection. He was, besides, an appointed witness. And yet he makes the very least use of his office. There is but a single mention, at the close of the second argument, in the words, "whereof all we are witnesses" (v. 32.) Immediately he carries the hearers' attention to that which had been patent to their eyes—the presence of the Holy Spirit—"which ye now see and hear." Who taught Peter to make this limited use of his own personal knowledge of the resurrection? And who taught him the higher wisdom to put this particular argument in just the right place?

Pages might be written on the grandeur of this address, which, it must not be forgotten, was extemporaneous. But this is sufficient to show that he who wrote it was either under supernatural influence, or was a supernatural person. To deny the inspiration of the address is to cast us on the other horn of the dilemma, that Peter was more than mortal man. It does not relieve the question much to say that Luke or any one else put it in Peter's mouth. For then Luke, or that other

supposititious person, must be more than mortal. The structure of the speech transcends human power. It must have come from God's Spirit.

It need but be noted what a change occurred in the apostles' knowledge about the resurrection. Up to Pentecost's day they had never understood it. They had questioned "one with another what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mark ix. 10). When Jesus died they had no hope of his rising, and when it was first reported that he had triumphed over the grave, they doubted the story. Their conception of the Messiah had been so much at variance with what he proved to be, that their eyes were closed to every ray of light from their Scriptures. But now they so clearly see the doctrine of the resurrection in the sacred Records that they use them in proof of it. The Holy Spirit opened for them the pages of the Book. They had read it before. They understood it now.

The results of Peter's sermon speak for themselves, and clearly testify to the presence of Messianic power. The vast concourse is bowed in an agony of conviction, and three thousand publicly enroll themselves as the followers of Jerusalem's rejected king.

This section, then, like every other one in the book, carries the credentials of its divinity within itself, and shows that what was done was not the work of man, but the gracious and miraculous deed of the ascended Lord.

SECTION III

THE NEW COMMUNITY

Acts ii. 42-47

The coming of the Holy Spirit had instant and marked effects on the apostles. They became new men. The history shows next, in a very brief section, the influence of the Spirit on the thousands who believed the word spoken by Peter. The better to understand this piece we must ask here what the Spirit does for men under the new dispensation. He was in the world before Pentecost's day. In the very first chapter of Genesis he is mentioned, and again in the sixth. David prayed "take not thy Holy Spirit from me," and the prophets "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify" (I Pet. i. 11.) Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were "filled with the Spirit," and prophesied under his power. And Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). How did these Old Testament endowments differ from this in the New? First, not in the moral fruits. Love, joy, peace, regeneration were no less known by the pious Israelite than by the Christian. Peter had no more delight and comfort in the Lord than David found. Indeed, he only

began to understand and preach David's Psalms when he received the power from on high. Nor, again, was the difference in certain extraordinary, not to say miraculous, manifestations like the gift of tongues. There was something similar to this in the Old Testament. Saul raved in prophecy, and saw others do the same (I Sam. x. 5, 6, 10; xix. 23, 24.) David danced before the Lord, and the prophets heard voices and saw visions. The signs of the Spirit's presence were more abundant in the New Testament era, but they were temporary. They ceased in a short time, probably before the end of the first century. It was not intended that they should continue.

The New Testament Spirit is given largely for service. Judaism was not intended to spread. Christianity was. The world was to be evangelized by Christ's followers, and with this work before them, the great qualifying gift was given, as it appears from Jesus' promises: "He shall glorify me." "He shall convince the world of sin." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." And that he came with a manifestation of tongues was not accidental, but indicative of his office.

In six particulars, at least, the New Testament outpouring of the Holy Spirit differed from the Old Testament possession.

First, he was given to every follower of the

Lord. "It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh;" that is, on believers of every rank, sex, age, or social station; on old men and young men, on males and females, on bond and free. In the former age he was given only to official persons, judges, (Judges xv. 14) kings, prophets, priests. His power seemed also to inhere in the office and to affect the incumbent no matter what he might be morally. Hence the true prophecy of wicked Caiaphas (John xi. 51). The New Testament gift raised every man in the kingdom to the exalted rank held formerly only by the few. Hence in the present dispensation all the followers of Jesus are addressed as a "royal priesthood," a "holy priesthood" (I Pet. ii. 5). Jesus was speaking of John as a witness, when he said, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The humblest disciple of Jesus to-day stands higher than John, and is capable of a clearer testimony to Jesus than this last and greatest of the prophets.

The second difference is that in this latter age the gift of the Spirit is bestowed on none but good men. He makes and keeps them good. In the kingdom of grace there is no place for a Caiaphas, a Baalam or a Saul, son of Cis. They could not receive the Spirit now. His presence is not outward, but inward, not only on men, but in them. He touches and masters the flesh. A David would be restrained from his gross and cruel immoralities.

And it must not be forgotten that it was while yet under the old dispensation that Peter denied the Lord, and Judas betrayed him. In the former day an unregenerate man might hold the office of priest or prophet, or king, and be an official witness of the truth. But now the witness must know the truth experimentally.

Again, the Spirit to-day unifies. By him all Christ's followers are baptized into one body. He unites them each to each, and all to Christ (I Cor. xii. 13; Eph. i. 23). The Old Testament kingdom was a unit, but not a spiritual one. It was held together by a code of laws, by a constitution. It could embrace men of but one nationality. The spiritual kingdom began so, but it soon broadened and became a "holy nation," welcoming men of all lands. Their speech and blood might differ, but, without any visible bond of union, their sympathies, their character, their conduct, their aims were alike, and all knew and owned the same Lord.

Again, by the Holy Spirit the New Testament believer is received into a relationship with God that was not realized by the saints under the former covenant. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). Christ is the first born among many "brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). They constitute a "household of God" (Eph. ii. 19) as well as a church.

Again, by the Holy Spirit God dwelt in his church. It became his temple (Eph. ii. 22). In the former days God dwelt with his people only by symbol. His temple was material, and he was present only by the shekinah. It is in this respect that the latter house far excels the glory of the former.

Finally, the gift of the Spirit in the latter days was a permanent endowment. "He shall abide with you forever" (Jno. xiv. 16). He deserted Saul, the first king of Israel, and he lost his office. No doubt this is David's meaning when, in remorse for his crimes, he cries, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. li). He had good reason to fear that it might go with him as it had gone with his predecessor, and that he might lose his crown. David's prayer must not be interpreted in a New Testament sense. Men might lose the Holy Spirit then. The symbol of his presence might desert the Jewish temple forever. But in the present blessed age he is present to stay.

In limiting his presence to believers the scope of these remarks will not be forgotten. They compass only those points in which the New Testament gift of the Spirit is peculiar. In every age regeneration is impossible without him. If in Paul's day the Lord must open Lydia's heart in order that she might attend to the word spoken (Acts xvi. 14), it is difficult to conceive how that word could anywhere or ever win saving human attention without the direct, divine and precedent aid.

Should it be asked why the Holy Spirit was not given before Christ came, one consideration is sufficient for an answer. He is the witness to the truth, and to what could he testify until the truth came?

The office of the Holy Spirit being of this character we can readily understand his influence on the believers at Pentecost. A new community was formed, new not merely in time, but in character. The bond being spiritual they were not visibly separated from the old community. The temple prayers and sacrifices were not abandoned. But their connection with Judaism was but local, while the union among themselves was in the living Christ, and in a brotherhood in Him. They were in the same vine with the other sons of Israel, but alive now and fruitful, while all their fellows were dead. They did not yet reject the old, for that was God's too, but they admitted the new. This newness was threefold and of such a character that its existence can be ascribed only to the Spirit sent down by the ascended Lord. It is his product and not man's.

First, the thousands accepted new spiritual guides. They "continued in the apostles' doctrine." The full meaning of this can be gained only by reflection. Who were these apostles who in an hour won so large a following, and one that could not be drawn from them afterward? They were untutored men from a distant province. They

were unknown in Jerusalem, were without credentials, and, unlike the scribes, carried the diploma of no school. No one would for a moment think of saluting them as Rabbi. And yet the thousands took them for instructors in questions pertaining to eternal life, and refused henceforth to be led by those qualified and recognized by their own law as moral guides. If the students in a modern divinity school should abandon their learned and pious professors to follow thereafter an obscure and fantastic street preacher, the marvel would be no greater. And it would mean the same thing, viz: that God was recognized to be with the street preacher. Men like Luther and Wesley have won a large following after years of patient toil. But who, save the fisherman of Galilee, won it in a day? God was with him. The matter cannot be explained unless we admit the overpowering presence of the Holy Spirit. He bound the thousands together, and bound them to Peter. They saw now, as Jesus saw, that the Jewish scribe and the doctors of the law were "blind guides," with no light in them.

A second feature in the new community was their cheerful acceptance of new ordinances. Though they continued in fellowship with Judaism, its prayers, and its temple worship, they were also all baptized, and they all observed the communion. The baptism is not so striking in the new community, for John had already made a place for it. Besides, the Mosaic law, with its rabbinical

additions, had accustomed the Jews to the religious use of water. But the communion was wholly new. It spoke of the suffering of Jesus, by implication of his resurrection and directly of his coming again. It was no more radically Christian than is baptism, but its meaning was harder to see. But they saw it, and communed in breaking of bread. And then, unlike baptism, the communion was a weekly, not to say a daily, ordinance of the new community. This new rite could not have been established unquestioningly and at once by any human power. Think what it would cost now to add in any Protestant denomination a third ordinance to the two already recognized. Both doctrines and ordinances may vary from century to century, but the latter neither increase nor diminish in number. Peter's followers accept two. It argues the divine presence. The ordinances are divinely created in their number and character. No human power could possibly impose a third today if even there existed the disposition to do so. And what men could not do now they could not have done then. If the water and the blood bear record to the truth (I Jno. v. 8) along with God's Holy Spirit, it is because the water and the blood are the Spirit's ordained witnesses. They are not man's.

The third feature in the new society was the community of goods, a striking testimonial of the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The thousands

recognized that they were one body in the Lord.

To abandon the individual title to possessions is an act contrary to nature. The love of property, covetousness, the sense of need, make men cling to what they have. There is no wickedness in honest possession. By what power did these men triumph over their natural instincts, so that they gave up their property and made themselves, their wives and children, penniless? Men never did so before, and they have not done so since, except in feeble imitation of these.

But the Jew had a double love for his temporalities. Property was to him a token of heaven's blessing. When his ways pleased Jehovah that complacence was shown in an increase in flocks and herds, and in abundant harvests. To be poor was to be under the divine frown. How came these people to obliterate their visible proof of heaven's favor unless they had received an invisible one? They had the testimony of their hearts to God's love toward them, and now no longer needed the grosser testimony of their wealth. That the church in after ages has found it most difficult to maintain the spirit of this Pentecostal benevolence, to say nothing of the letter, goes far in showing the extraordinary influence prevailing in that early day. Convinced as they were that the Messiah had given his life for them, they must have thought it but right to give at least their property for his sake. Where there is no pecuniary benevolence there is

no evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

These three features of the new community were the work of Christ through his Spirit. Mere human power could not have produced them. What he does indicates his will, and ought to guide his followers in all time. The continuance in the apostolic teaching and in the ordinances is maintained. Why is not the community of goods authoritative? It might be said that we have the spirit of it in the general benevolence of the church. But this answer will not serve. The ordinances are binding in the letter and in the form. Why not the community of goods? Only because of subsequent apostolic instruction in which Peter clearly admits a man's right to his own (Acts v. 4). Besides, there is no evidence that any church outside of Jerusalem had all things in common. The evidence points the other way. On other grounds Christ's followers are bound to be benevolent, but they are under no obligation to maintain a common purse.

SECTION IV

THE APOSTLES REFUSE TO BE DIRECTED BY THE COUNCIL AND FIND A SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Acts iii. 1—iv. 35

The Scripture considered in the last section gives an outlook of a year or more over the believing society. It was not for one day or for one month that they "continued" in the apostles' doctrine, and in the maintenance of the communion, and of their common treasury. But now Luke turns from the history of the church to an episode which belongs to some time in this history. There is no hint of the precise date. But from the substance of the section it looks as if some months, not to say a whole year, intervened between it and Pentecost. Among other things we are informed in this passage that the community of goods was kept up. How can this second mention be justified unless we admit a considerable lapse of time between it and the first mention? But at whatever date the event before us occurred, for this is not material, the lesson is plain. It comes out clearly in the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the fourth chapter. God delivers the church from the direction of the Jewish council. The church's own conscience, inspired and enlightened by the

divine Spirit becomes its sole guide. In other words, not even an implied director must exist between Christ and his people. The Sanhedrin is defied. The believers will follow the lead of Jesus only.

Somewhere among the "wonders and signs" which attended the church all along (ii. 43) one was wrought so marked that the authorities must notice it. The lame man was healed within the temple itself. He was well known, as he daily occupied the same place before the beautiful gate of the temple. The temple worshipers were acquainted with his ailment and its character. The man, when healed, thoroughly advertised the fact by his wild demonstration of delight in the temple. He stood, he walked, he leaped, he shouted in praise to God. He makes a lively use of his new-found powers.

After the resurrection the rulers appear to have paid no attention to the religious movement in the city. Having secured the death of Jesus, and having heard nothing about him now for some time, they may have persuaded themselves that the work begun by him was at an end. They may not have been informed of the apostles' activity in the months just passed, or, if they heard of it, they had ignored it. But be the reason for the rulers' indifference up to this time what it may, the healing of the lame man led them to act, and to act decidedly. But they had not merely the miracle to stir them. It was accompanied by a speech from

Peter that must have inflamed them. Its temper is wholly different from that at Pentecost. He begins with a series of pungent antitheses characterizing their conduct in rejecting Jesus. God glorified him. Ye delivered him up. Ye denied him when even the heathen Pilate would have let him go free. Ye refused a holy man, and chose as your idol a murderer. Ye killed the very Prince of life, but God set himself against your conduct in that he raised him from the dead. It is he whom ye accounted a malefactor—it is through him that this benevolence is exhibited before you. These stinging words must have been like live coals in their consciences. But Peter grows conciliatory. Though he does not excuse their wicked conduct, he accounts for it. It flowed from an ignorance whose black pall covered people and rulers alike. With what significance he says "your" rulers. How much it implies. They are yours, and we have more light than they possess. There is a self-consciousness of independence and superiority. This single word shows the drift of this section.

But Peter encourages his hearers. He is a Jew, and they are Jews. He assures them that on their repentance their sins against the Messiah, black as he has shown them to be, can be blotted out. They are to repent also (iii. 19) in order that (the "when" of the King James' version is wholly incorrect) the predicted times of refreshing

may come, and that God may send them Jesus Christ. All the prophets have foretold these happy days to come. The Messiah is absent now, but only until the time of restitution (iii. 19-26).

The speech is spiritual, it demands repentance, but its promises are largely Jewish. The hope held out is not that the hearer may depart and be with Christ, it is that Christ may return and be with him. It answers, as far as it can be answered, the question of the first chapter, asked just before the ascension: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Peter has learned something meanwhile. Christ has been received in heaven, but he will come again at the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets. It is the old Jewish hope, but its grossness is eliminated. It is the hope set before the Jewish heart to-day.

This promise of his coming again must have stirred the rulers. It implied not only his resurrection, but a revival of all the trouble that they had made for themselves when he was present. The priests, the chief of police in the temple and the Sadducees have Peter and John arrested. What is the charge? That they taught the people, and preached the resurrection (iv. 2). It was the speech that went to their souls. They would have been glad enough to consider it apart from the healing of the lame man, but they could not. The command of the Sanhedrin was not that they should not heal, but that they should not teach.

Peter's address to the people was the real grievance. He and his fellow laborer are imprisoned until the morrow. They have met their first opposition. But how mild it is. They are shut up only because the day is too far gone for an immediate trial. There are no harsh Roman guards, no chains, no stocks. These came later, after the flesh of the witnesses has become somewhat indurated. God spares them from an overwhelming trial at the start. The first time their Master was arrested he was chained and mocked and killed. Not so the followers.

At this point (v. 5), while we are waiting for the morrow, the history gives us the number of the believers. While the five thousand were Jews, every one, they were something more, much more. The difference was such that they were known, and could be counted. Peter's teaching was not only filling the city, that was not so serious, but it was putting a spiritual stamp on men, a stamp plain to be seen. And that there were five thousand such who could no longer be counted with the multitude, but must be allotted to Peter's party, was not soothing to the rulers. Church statistics are significant and valuable when they imply character rather than numbers.

With the dawn of day the great Jewish council meets. To show the seriousness of the hour Luke gives the names of some of the high functionaries.

Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas we have met before. John and Alexander are unknown. Their names are mentioned for their official weight, not for their moral worth. And now Peter stands in a presence the most august on earth. He is not abashed. He makes his defense with such skill and ease of utterance as to win the admiration of his inimical judges. His opening sentence has a sting of sarcasm in it: "If we this day be examined of the good deed done," we, men, charged with a work that is certainly superhuman, charged, too, not with a crime but with a deed of benevolence. The council was at a disadvantage from the start. The fishermen were too much for the astute Sanhedrists. The latter were vexed with the apostles' teaching, but they could not disjoin it from the miracle, and Peter makes the most of that. Was it here that he learned, what he afterward wrote, how "with well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Pet. ii. 15)? A good deed was then, as it is now, the bulwark of the gospel. And how is it that these very men who had talked so wisely about the proper time to apprehend Jesus (Mark xiv. 2)—how is it that they committed the egregious blunder of arresting the apostles so inopportunely? Any other time would have served Annas and his company better. May we see here the guidance of an overruling power, that made Peter all the mightier in defense by making his opponents weak?

But while the prisoners are saved from punishment, they meet what is a vastly greater trouble —they are forbidden to teach or to preach. They refuse to be silent. They announce their determination to disobey. The marvel of the apostles' stand is twofold. First, they rebel against the authority constituted by the law of Moses. The Sanhedrin was an ancient and an august body. The high-priest was its head. It was the supreme spiritual judicatory in Israel. But, more than all, Jesus himself seemed to admit its rightful authority. He said to his disciples: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore that they bid you, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works" (Matt. xxiii. 1, 2.) The very condemnation of their conduct by Jesus is a testimony to their office. Their wrong-doing did not annul their title. How now, in the face of their constitutionality and Jesus' endorsement of it, can we justify Peter and John in practically denying it? There is but one way. The boldness, the interpretative insight, the courage, the resolution of this hour were the product of the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus' words, which sweepingly admitted the regulating power of the great council, are seen to be inapplicable here. Just how they reconciled them with the stand which they took against them, we cannot tell. But they did reconcile them, and rightly too. Perhaps they said an institution of the law has no jurisdiction beyond the law, and

cannot claim it in the realm of the spirit. Certain it is that they refused to obey the council in the matter of preaching the gospel.

But now what are they to do? To go on with their work is a contempt of court that may lead to the destruction of the apostles. They find their way walled up to heaven. They are in a strait from which there seems to be no human deliverance. They recognize their helplessness, for they go to their own company, and with them appeal to God, not now as the searcher of hearts (i. 24,) not as a lover and friend, but as the first cause: "Thou, Lord, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is." For nothing but the same creative power can now make a way for them. They encourage their hearts in detecting that the situation into which they have come is precisely like that, indeed, is that at which he who is "sitting in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. ii.) They recite the psalm before the Lord: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ." They have the spiritual perception which shows them that this prophecy is now theirs. They identify its terms with a precision that parallel columns make apparent at a glance;

PROPHECY.	HISTORY.
Kings	Herod
Rulers	Pilate
Heathen	Gentiles
People	Israel.

The failure to see that their own days were predicted days was the ruin of the Jews. They could not read the signs of the times. They unwittingly fulfilled the voices of their own prophets, heard every Sabbath day, by condemning Jesus. The apostles were not so dull. They were under the guidance of him who gave the prediction, and by his aid they knew the times to which it referred.

But while this Scripture would encourage the early church, it also warned it. If God would turn its enemies into derision, the church itself must henceforth pursue its course against opposition. If the disciples will not obey the council, they may expect that council's hot opposition.

The disciples' prayer is very pointed. It touches nothing but the thing in hand. They do not ask the Lord that their enemies and his may be given a better heart. They do not ask that they themselves may be spared from opposition, from pains and penalties. Their only entreaty is that they may be enabled to do what they avowed before the council they would do. They were sure that was their part, and, if they could do this, all the rest could be left to God. The answer comes at

once. It is significant, and easily understood. "The place was shaken where they were assembled together." It could hardly have been a house. He who shook the earth must be its maker. They had cried to him as creator, and he answers in that character. His fiat shall open a way for them to continue the preaching of the gospel.

And here we might expect the section to end. It is complete. But we find appended a second statement of the community of goods. What purpose does this repetition serve? It shows that the fierce shock of opposition did not shatter the church at the very point where it might be expected to break. In the enthusiasm of their love just after Pentecost, when they had "favor with all the people," they may risk to part with their goods. But will they continue to abandon their earthly dependencies in the face of persecution? A man may part with his superfluous outer coat when the sun shines warm. But will he be equally benevolent in the hour of the raging storm? This second mention of the community of goods supplements the first. The church's benevolence was not fanaticism. It was born of the Spirit, and so maintained itself when trials came. And the mention of it here shows that what seemed to be gold in the sunlight, proves also to be gold in the crucible.

SECTION V

THE SACREDNESS OF THE CHURCH

Acts iv. 36—v. 16

The five thousand are no longer under the direction of the Great Council. They are a compact body with "one heart and one soul." They have become an independent company. It is instructive that they are not called the church until this section is reached. The word is spurious in the last verse of the second chapter. But now, when they have resolved to be led only by the Spirit, are they for the first time given the worthy title.

This independence confers a dignity upon them, a dignity more than earthly. If it was right for them to remove from Judaism, God had moved with them, and was among them. All the sacredness that had once belonged to the tabernacle and the temple was now transferred to them. They were a holy body. This is the lesson of this section, and this the church itself, as well as the Jewish mass around it, did not know until God's judgment gleamed among them. This ignorance was not justifiable, but inevitable. Men are slow to learn reverence in God's presence. Moses does not put off his shoes before the burning bush until commanded. If Nadab and Abihu can see no differ-

ence between the holy tabernacle and an Egyptian shrine, the stroke of sudden death must teach it. If a David will place God's ark on a cart, and not carry it on the shoulders of men as the law prescribed (1 Chron. xv. 13), one of his chief men must die. The judgment on Ananias and Sapphira was of the same character and for the same purpose. God would teach that nothing unhallowed can be admitted in the service of his house. And the church was now his house. Another reason made this judgment inevitable in the church. What was the body? Who composed it? It was made up of the common people. Common people from Galilee were its leaders. None of the priests had at this time believed in Jesus. There were so many poor in the church that special provision had to be made on their account. It was a body without an acknowledged head, without a place of worship which it could call its own, without wealth and without social rank, a company of enthusiasts with no visible reason for existence. Who in that day, or in any day, could respect an assemblage of such a character? Who with less spirituality than an apostle possessed could even learn that God dwelt in such a body? For society so constantly estimates men entirely by their adventitious circumstances that it has wholly forgotten that the Divine One is no respecter of persons, and rates men only as men.

Luke shows plainly how the lesson of the sacred-

sonalities was present in his church, and Ananias and his wife, in attempting to deceive men, were really insulting God. Peter's language makes it very clear that the church was God's dwelling-place, worthy of the same reverence that the tabernacle and its outgrowth the temple once possessed. Hence the judgment that overwhelmed Nadab and Abihu overtook also Ananias and Sapphira. Its significance is at once plain to all. For three times in this short section we are told of the awe that seized both the church and the community. "Of the rest," (those outside the holy assemblage) "durst no man join himself unto them, but the people magnified them." They must admit in the presence of this double, miraculous judgment in the church, that God was in it. It gave the church a holy character. The result was, and this is to be observed not only here but at the close of every one of these earlier sections of the book, a marked increase in power. While hypocrites feared to join the church, believers multiplied, the reputation of the church spread to the neighboring Judean towns, and Peter gained such fame that his very shadow was coveted.

In this story of Ananias' lie, even a casual reading shows that he spoke no word. It does not explain the matter to say, in popular language, he acted a lie. What he did was to take advantage of a common understanding, of a common custom created by God's Spirit. Those who gave to the

church had been moved up to this time to give all, so that it had come to be considered as a matter of course that when any man brought an offering he brought his entire property.

Ananias seizes on this. He virtually said to himself: "I will take only a part of my money, and thereby get the credit of having given my whole possession." It was freely conceded that he was under no obligation to give all his substance, nor, indeed, any of it, but he must not lay his hands on that sacred reputation which he did not deserve. It is sadly easy to set this sin forth by modern illustrations. The common understanding to-day, at least in the church, is that, when a man attends its worship, and participates in the communion, he is a good man. It is not difficult for the blackest hypocrisy to avail itself of this presumption, and pose before God's people as piety. It is always assumed, in America at least, that when a man preaches to-day, he preaches sermons prepared by himself. This assumption furnishes a ready cloak for the man who covets a reputation which he is too lazy to earn, or for which God, by withholding larger endowment, has not intended him. Such moral breaches class the offenders with the first New Testament liars. If the same dire calamity does not at once overtake them, that first judgment of sudden death surely measures the enormity of every sin of false pretense in the church and adumbrates the judgment to come. If

God now dwells anywhere among men, his abode is in his church. And that presence makes it holy. The church is not a religious club. It is not an association for moral culture merely. It is not a mere human creation. It is the house of God, and to fail to honor and reverence it as such is to be in danger of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

SECTION VI

THE DIVINE ENDORSEMENT OF THE APOSTLES AS AUTHORITATIVE TEACHERS

Acts v. 17-42.

This section is the sequel of the last but one. It is logically connected with the story of the first arrest of the disciples, and is complementary of that story. When the disciples were first brought before the council they refused to obey its command, and went away saying, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (iv. 20). They continued to teach and to preach, and now in this second arrest God gives his unmistakable approval of their course. They receive direct divine credentials that they are heaven's authorized teachers of its truth.

Such an approval was needed. The thoughtful reader of the book of Acts finds comfort and a certain sense of confirmation in this section. It has something of the character of a parenthesis. Anyone can see how easy it would have been to join verse sixteen, of the fifth chapter with the first verse of the sixth chapter, and omit our present paragraph altogether. The omission would have marred neither the logic nor the symmetry of the Acts. But two considerations demand and justify

its presence. First of all, the approval of the apostles' course in leaving the council after their former imprisonment was decisive, but it was not complete. May not the stand which they then took have resulted from religious obstinacy or arrogance? To be sure when they prayed for help in their dilemma the place was shaken, but might not the earthquake tremor have been a natural coincidence? And furthermore, in so far as it was an attestation of their course, its testimony went no further than the bounds of the church. The rulers could not have been influenced by it. Indeed, if the members of the Sanhedrin felt the seismic shock they might have claimed, if they had had occasion to make any claim about it, that it approved their course in condemning the preaching of the gospel. But now, in the section before us, the twelve are given a sanction which is unmistakable, which is patent to all, and which makes it certain that the stand taken by the apostles was right, and that the earthquake tremor was vastly more than a coincidence. It was the answer of God to the prayer of the church.

Again, the reader of this book needs a section like this to get on a level with the apostles, and to understand them. Without it we must look upon them as something more than mortal. They were but men. They had all the feelings and infirmities of men. How is it that they did not yield to these? They had taken the awful responsibility of

guiding Israel in matters pertaining to eternal life. It is a position in which the stoutest hearts have trembled. The apostles had no earthly sanction, no visible credentials. The opposition of the legal teachers was gathering like a thunder-cloud to burst upon their heads. They needed a "strong assurance." The reader of the book feels no little relief in finding here that they receive it. He knows now that though they are inspired apostles, they are also men like himself, unable to pursue a thorny path very far alone. They need help from time to time. Paul, after enduring a course of persistent persecution, received divine encouragement (Acts xviii. 9, 10). John the Baptist painfully hesitated in his testimony (Matt. xi. 3), even after he saw the Spirit like a dove descend upon the head of Jesus. The apostles needed encouragement. It is helpful to find just at this stage of their history that it was given.

The contents of the section are simple. The apostles are arrested and thrown into prison. The reason for their incarceration is not now merely because "it was eventide" (iv. 3). In the eyes of the law they were malefactors. But an angel delivers them. When rearrested and brought before the council, the adroit speech of Gamaliel secures their release with nothing worse than a beating. The proof of their credentials as teachers may be summed up in two sentences. First, God's miraculous care of them, and, secondly, the

ensuing consciousness of their own dignity and exalted position. As to the first, an angel leads them out of the jail so secretly that not even the guards detected the escape. The mention of the guards and their vigilance makes the suspicion of unlawful jail breaking impossible. The perplexity of the council when at last they learn that their prisoners are teaching in the temple, shows that the escape transcended any rational explanation. It was miraculous. Again, the apostles have a command from the angel to "speak in the temple all the words of this life." Not one jot was to be abated in deference to the Sadducees, who were most offended. The requirements and the significance of the command are seen at once. Their escape will soon be discovered, and if they preach at all it must be at once. So they enter into the temple "very early in the morning." And while the service in the temple must necessarily be brief yet it showed the apostles' right to teach, for God commanded it. It was to be held, not in the upper room, not in the open street, but in the temple, in God's house. If they were teachers at all they were teachers in the very highest place. Another point in God's directing care is the unexpected course of Gamaliel. His speech in the council proved to be the apostles' salvation. He shrewdly begins by hinting that they may be such fanatics as Theudas or as Judas. In this case a similar end was inevitable. And now at the prop-

er place, (and this betrays his own conviction) he warns the council that the apostles' work may after all be from God. In the latter case to oppose is perilous. His speech won the reluctant consent of the Sadducees, and the death which was intended was commuted to the beating in which the apostles gloried. The mention of the spirit (v. 41) in which they took their chastisement shows their confidence in their course.

By their miraculous delivery from prison, and the command to speak in the temple, the apostles were certain to be self-possessed when brought before the council. They were more. They use one word that must have stung their enemies, a word that stripped these enemies of every official prerogative. When the council inquires: "Did we not straitly command you that you should not teach in this name," the answer comes sharp and quick: "We ought to obey God rather than *men*." Peter may have admitted their official character before. He does so no longer. The council by its opposition to the Spirit has lost its credentials. It is henceforth only a conclave of men, and the apostles are the leaders of Israel.

Another sentence in Peter's speech discloses his consciousness of his own dignity, and that of his fellow laborers. After reciting the simple facts of the gospel he declares: "And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Spirit," a sentence whose quiet sublimity can be easier felt

than described. Peter puts himself on the same plane with the Holy Spirit, so far as testimony to the truth is concerned. He even mentions himself and his fellows before he mentions the Spirit. By the angelic rescue the apostles have learned not only that their course pleases God, but that they themselves are at one with him in spreading his truth, "laborers together with God" (I Cor. iii. 9), and that they are special objects of his care. If they have no official place they have what is better, an official consciousness. And they plainly intimate that the council is devoid of the latter. For they say of the Holy Ghost that he is given to "all them that obey him" and the council is not obeying; it is opposing. And so the apostles go away from the council having in their hearts the Spirit's seal of their authority as preachers and leaders.

SECTION VII

THE CHURCH SUPERIOR TO ITS INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES

Acts vi. 1-7

The church has proved itself able so far to overcome every outward hindrance. It comes now to meet one within its own ranks. The trouble is very serious, but it is not beyond the church's power to allay it. The number of the disciples was multiplying. While the field was small there was room neither for accidental nor intentional neglect in the daily distribution of alms. The broadening area of the church gave ample scope for both. But the disturbance was threatening, because the wrong-doing was not accidental. It was planned. How else can we account for the fact that alms were withheld from persons of one particular class? The murmuring of the Grecians, the foreign-born Jews, arose against their home-born brethren. We are wholly in the dark as to the cause of this neglect. Neither can we guess by what means the alms had been distributed hitherto. Just one ugly fact stands out—widows were left to suffer, and widows only of alien birth. A breach in the church was imminent. The wrong-doing could not be justified. It was plainly delib-

erate. But can it be removed? Can this vexatious, partisan benevolence be made to give place to an even-handed, impartial charity?

The historian intends us to see that the church itself had power to recover from the ulcer that menaced its life. The apostles do not settle the question by authority. They throw the whole question back upon the church, even though it is in a disturbed and disquieted state. It is not only a better spirit that is needed now in the body, but also a better organization. Peace will return when there are more peacemakers. The twelve suggest the appointment of seven men, but refuse to have anything further to do in the case, except to confirm the church's selection of its almoners. Their reason for this refusal is that they may "give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Evidently they looked upon their supplications and their preaching as the highest benevolence. To draw them from their own proper work was another evil that the church trouble threatened. But they will not cease preaching, even to feed hungry widows. Let the church do its own work, and not burden the ministers of the Word.

The men to be selected must have three qualifications: "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom." That they were to look out such men clearly implies two things, that the church was old enough to have afforded time for the

growth of individual reputation, and that such growth was not yet general in the church. Honest report, a good reputation, would at once inspire confidence, so that the new men placed over the almsgiving would not be suspected of partiality. Their rich possession of the Holy Spirit would make them earnest and energetic, and their wisdom would teach them ways and means to execute their difficult office. The fitness sought in the seven men was moral and religious. Social and business standing was not considered.

The wisdom of the apostles' course commends itself to the church. So far, at least, the body is a unit again. The men are presented, and the apostles set them apart for their work. The trouble is allayed. We are given to understand this by the happy note with which the section closes—"disciples multiplied" again, and "a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." The sacerdotal class had not been among the converts hitherto, but the church having shown itself able to subdue its own internal strife, they are attracted to it along with many others.

SECTION VIII

THE BROADENING OF THE CHURCH IN THE SPHERE OF ITS WORK

Acts vi. 8—ix. 43

The church is now on the verge of a crisis. The appointment of the seven men to distribute the alms had an outcome surely not anticipated. It started the church on its mission to evangelize the world. Some years must have elapsed since the apostles received their commission to preach the gospel to the whole creation. Pentecost is five or six years in the past, and the risen Christ has not yet been preached out of the sight of Herod's temple. The disciples have been left here long enough to test whether Israel would repent and secure the promise spoken by Peter, "that he may send the Christ who has been appointed for you, Jesus" (iii. 19, 20, A. B. U. Ver.).

One little note in the last section, when rightly heard, gave warning that the line of march to the world's limit was about to begin. The reader is informed that "disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly." Why say in Jerusalem? To intimate that there were none elsewhere, but especially to show that the time had come to break the narrow bounds. And long as the church had now existed, and multiplied in numbers as it was, not a

single Gentile had been invited to cross its threshold. None can enter yet, but the door is about to be opened to them. The next few months will witness a revolution more significant than any seen before or since. History was never made so fast. The barriers of ages are to be broken down, and the God of the Jews is to be accepted by the nations. Our section gives us an account of the first long stride in this direction. It tells of the opposition aroused by Stephen, gives his speech before the council, his death and the dreadful persecution which followed the same day, and scattered the church; the conversion of the half heathen Samaritans and the Ethiopian prince, and finally the miraculous calling and cleansing of another man for the apostolate. If the church's work was to be broadened there must be more laborers, and laborers of broader views. We get the men in Stephen, Philip and Saul. We see in Stephen's speech how Jewish narrowness was giving way, at least in the minds of some of the disciples, and a more liberal view taking its place.

The settlement of the trouble about the daily ministration of the poor fund was the entering wedge to the new movement. That settlement certainly brought the Hellenistic Jews to the front rank. The names of the seven are all Greek. The last one in the list is a Jew by religion, but not by blood—"a proselyte of Antioch." This little note is rich in meaning. We find Stephen as

soon as he enters upon his office preaching in the Hellenistic synagogues. Plainly these foreign Jews with their more liberal thoughts had been suppressed. There must have been strong feeling, or why were their widows neglected while the home-born, Jewish widows were regularly fed? How could these foreign Jews, with their hearts full of God's love, forget their brethren in distant countries throughout the Roman empire? If they had not acted as yet they must have thought much. And seven of them having been put into the front now, God soon gave them an opportunity for more extended work. They set out with a few loaves to feed their widows. It was not long till they had to feed the world with the bread of life.

The course of events is not hard to trace. Stephen goes about with his alms. His work takes him to every part of the city, a work whose very beauty and Christ-likeness excite opposition in the hearts of the faithless Jews. He would meet these first in the unbelieving sons or other relatives of the widows to whom he carried relief. He would heal the sick he met, and do other benevolent wonders. Debate would follow. It would not be long till some vanquished opponent would bring charges against Stephen in the Grecian synagogue to which he belonged. The synagogue was no match for his spirit and wisdom. Craft is summoned, and false witnesses testify that he speaks against the temple and the Law, that he

says Jesus will destroy the one and change the other. Where is Peter at this time? Where are the rest of the twelve? What does it mean a little further along in this section that we are told that all were scattered abroad, "except the apostles?" Why were these excepted? They had not offended. They had angered the Sadducees, but the synagogue and the people honored them. The gospel so far preached was rich, clear, saving, but limited. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision, fitted in every way by grace, by training, by mental characteristics, for Judea. The only failure he ever made after Pentecost was in the Gentile city of Antioch (Gal. ii. 8-11). He knew how to deal in Jerusalem. To say that he founded the church in Rome is to deny the character both of the man and his work, and to make nothing of the special grace conferred upon him by the Lord.

But Stephen was sure to wound the dearest Jewish prejudice. The charge of profanity brought against him was false. But he gave the occasion for it. While he must have honored the temple and revered the Law, his respect was not confined to them, as his speech in his own defense clearly shows. In studying this speech it must be remembered that it keeps this charge always in view, while it proves by their own history that the Jews always resisted God. Four thoughts stand out in this discourse: first, that God's dealing with his people showed constant progress. The end was

not reached by a leap, but by development. In proof the story of Abraham is recited. He did not get into the promised land in a month or a year (vii. 4). When he reached it after a long sojourn in Haran it became his only by promise to his seed (v. 5). He did not get the covenant of circumcision till his closing days (v. 8). God's dealing with Abraham was progressive. It was so with his seed. When Joseph summons his brethren to Eygpt there were but seventy-five of them, and they remain few until the "time of the promise" drew near, several hundred years later (v. 17). Abraham's immediate offspring did not receive the promised land. All they got in it was a grave which had to be purchased "for a sum of money from the sons of Emmor." (v. 16). When the hour of delivery came the people were not ready for it, and had to wait forty years while Moses tarried in the "land of Midian." The temple in which they boasted was not an exception. The idea of it was given in the tabernacle. Not until David's day was a house proposed, and not until his son's day was it finally built. Israel had existed a long time without it. The difference between Stephen and his hearers was the difference between the living and the dead, a difference often to be noted in the religious realm. Life means growth. Death is inability to go on. The Jew would not move. It seemed to him that the end of all things was reached in the temple, and in the

Law. When the Messiah came he was expected to do no more than to deliver from political disabilities, and complete that which was. Crystallization had ensued. Stephen showed how God continually advanced from one stage to another. The last stage was not reached in Judaism. God was leading on, Stephen was following, and the Jews, as usual, resisting the Holy Ghost.

Stephen's second thought is that the temple is not exclusively holy. This stands out so clear that his hearers could not fail to get it. God appeared to Abraham in a heathen land, in Mesopotamia, even before he came to Charan (v. 2). Abraham's seed was to sojourn in a strange land (v. 6). Joseph had his whole glorious career in Egypt. His father found a famine in the holy land, and had to go down to the heathen land where he passed his last days. In that same land their great leader was born exceeding fair, and was educated there (v. 22). In another heathen land this Moses found God. His signs and wonders were done in Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness (v. 36). The angel was with him in the wilderness. The lively oracles were received there (v. 38). The fathers had the tabernacle of witness, the germ of the temple, in the wilderness. Of all the good things to which Stephen points, Israel did not possess one apart from a heathen land, except the temple, and of that he says it was expressly declared that God was not

confined to it (vs. 48-50). What was the lesson? Where God is there is his sanctuary. He said to Moses in the land of Midian: "The place where thou standest is holy ground." If God was with the church in Jerusalem, that church was holy. But Stephen's speech looks further. If God goes to the Gentiles now that will make them acceptable. By look and gesture and emphasis Stephen would not fail of being understood. They would get the divine lesson which he had gathered for them in the inspired history. But here, too, they were resisting the Holy Ghost.

The third thought which Stephen presents is somewhat complex, but yet very clear. Israel, as the martyr's historical citations disclose, invariably opposed God in his first offer of mercy, rejected the deliverer sent, suffered awhile in consequence, and then accepted that very deliverer afterward. Each stage in the chosen people's course has a dual phase. Abraham did not reach Canaan by an unbroken journey. He stopped in Charan, and did not go on till he suffered the loss of his father. The second effort brought him to the promised land. Joseph, the well-beloved son, was sent to his brethren with their father's love. They maltreated him, but on their next contact with him they find him their deliverer. In this case we have the duality repeated. The first time the brethren went for corn they did not recognize their benefactor. But "at the second time Joseph was made

known to his brethren" (v. 13). The hour and the occasion made it easy for Stephen to press home on his hearers in all its significance the simple story of Joseph's rejection. Had his auditors not rejected Jesus, a beloved son sent to his brethren in love? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The history of Moses is the same. He left the court of Pharaoh to visit his brethren in their bondage, "for he supposed they would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not" (v. 25). And so they suffered forty years longer, until Moses was sent a second time (vs. 30-34). After the delivery the promised land is not reached until a second leader, with the same purpose as the first, is given to them. Though Moses was with the angel in Mount Sinai the people deserted his guidance, turned back in their hearts to Eygpt, wallowed in idolatrous sin and suffering for forty years in the wilderness until Joshua led them into their possession (v. 45). And even in the building of the temple this duality is not forgotten. David desired to build the house, but Solomon accomplished it. In two of the cases cited another feature is added. Though Joseph's brethren for envy sold him into Egypt, "God was with him" (v. 9) and he was marvelously prospered among the heathen. The same was true of Moses, as is shown in the quiet little phrase that while in the land of Midian "he begat two sons" (v. 29). The family given

him was a token of God's favor. In speaking (vs. 35-37) of the rejection of Moses by the children of Israel and his subsequent deliverance of them from bondage, Stephen's eloquence has a vehemence, a grandeur, lost, to be sure, in our translation, which must have been awe-inspiring in the heart of any candid hearer.

The lesson in all this is evident enough. Were the Jews now, by their opposition to the gospel, once more about to reject the deliverer sent to them, to have him depart and prosper among the Gentiles while Israel meanwhile suffered until God should be pleased to send him a second time? "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 24) "And ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39). Stephen clearly saw the doom threatening his countrymen, and that their despised Lord was on the eve of seeking his glory among the nations that the Jew hated.

The fourth point in the address is seen at a glance, and can be dispatched with a word. If the prisoner is accused of disloyalty to Moses, he shows the falsity of the charge by his constant reference to the Law, whose writer he quotes as a prophet of Jesus. It was not he, it was his hearers who were law breakers. In a burst of impassioned words he charges the nation with its long-

continued crime, its murder of the Just One, and its outrage of the angel-given code. This is the end. By stoning the speaker they add one more bloody proof to their wickedness, which was so plainly portrayed, while Stephen, in the spirit of the Master whom he sees, prays for his tormentors. The rejection of Jesus is completed in the person of his first martyr, and now soon we must follow his church elsewhere. The beginning of Jerusalem's end has come.

But the city was not unanimous in its sentiment of persecution. Devout men, Jews and not believers, gave Stephen an honorable burial, and sincerely lamented his fall. But another party directed its hate against the church. Apparently the executioners of Stephen rushed back to the city as soon as he was dead, and assailed the church. In the flight of the believers we are told they went at first no further than Judea and Samaria (viii. 1). But a new thing occurs now. Hitherto the gospel seems to have been preached only by the twelve. Now the scattered church goes "everywhere preaching the word." The dissemination of the truth is no longer an exclusively apostolic function. When the field was enlarged the laborers were multiplied. We are not to suppose that these scattered believers declared the truth at first in any set form. The circumstances into which they were thrown by the persecution, would inevitably make them tell the story of love.

As they sought shelter in the villages and towns of Judea they must explain how they came to be there, why they had left Jerusalem and were now wanderers. This would soon bring to the surface the latent talent in the dispersed church, and more formal preaching would ensue. We hear of this later on. (Acts xv. 35). The historian tells how a city of Samaria was evangelized. The leader was Philip, not one of the apostles, for they were not scattered, but one of the seven, the second one mentioned in the catalogue of their names (vi. 5). The first one had precipitated the broader work by going into the Hellenistic synagogues in Jerusalem. The second one carries it on beyond the city's walls. We certainly now have a distinct step forward, for while the apostles remained behind in Jerusalem, we are given to understand that the gospel was successfully preached by others.

God's purposes and God's plans are very far-reaching. We see now why the Samaritans were raised up more than six hundred years before, and why they had been preserved in their half and half character for centuries. They were neither Jews nor Gentiles. They were midway between these distant moral extremes. Jesus in his ministry never went distinctly among the heathen, said he was commissioned only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. xv. 24), but he honored these Samaritans (Jno. iv). And now God uses them as a sort of half-way house from those in the

covenant to those who were outside of it. They were the ladder without which even the believing Jew, hampered as he was by his scruples, could not have got down to the uncircumcised Gentile. The leap was too great. The gulf between the two extremes was social, religious, political—and the Samaritan bridged it. God plainly intended him for this from the first.

Since we have now a new work with new laborers, we have the Pentecost features repeated. Miracles attended the preaching (viii. 6). Baptism is mentioned, and believers came in great numbers. Indeed, we are evidently given to understand that as the gospel spread the divine power attending it was intensified, for here many unclean spirits were cast out, and the paralytics were restored. Peter, to be sure, wrought great signs at the beginning of his work, but none of this lofty character. Thousands had been converted in Jerusalem, but many thousands more rejected the gospel, while here the people with "one accord" gave heed, and "great joy" possessed the whole town.

Two other features in this Samaritan revival are plainly presented for our attention. Simon the magician occupies considerable space in the story. It will be recollected that we have two other similar stories in this book, in similar circumstances, the case of Elymas (xiii. 8), and that of the maiden with the spirit of divination (xvi. 16). They

stand at the beginning of a new work, and show what the gospel had to encounter and overcome in that beginning. The gospel had not triumphed over the high priest in Jerusalem, but it mastered the self-appointed high priest of this Samaritan city. He who had bewitched the people is now left a selfish suppliant at the feet of the apostles, entreating that the woes which he deserves may not come upon him. He and his money have lost their spell.

The other feature is that while Philip could lead the people to Christ and baptize them, he could not confer the Holy Ghost. Peter and John came down from Jerusalem to do this. Here three things are implied: first, that the diffusion of the gospel was not to sever it. Jerusalem was not over Samaria, but Samaria could not be independent of Jerusalem. The apostolic office must be recognized and honored. Again, by the presence of these leading apostles and the conferring of the miraculous elements attending the Spirit's presence, the new work was fully accredited as genuine. The third implication is subtile: if the Samaritans can believe and rejoice in that belief for some time without the gift of the Holy Spirit in his outward manifestations (vs. 16, 17), and if he cannot be so given except by the imposition of an apostle's hands, is it not plain that the time has begun when he will no longer be present in his extraordinary displays? The twelve could not go the world over

to lay hands on millions. There is no hint that the Romans had this particular gift. The same is true of other churches. The gift, as this Samaritan account shows, was not intended to be universal, nor permanent. Men could accept and serve Christ without it. It was a sign only while signs were needed (I Cor. xiv. 22).

The beautiful record of the Eunuch's conversion is given next. Its intent is the same, to show how the work was broadening. The first thing noted in the story is that the Lord specifically directed Philip to this man. The evangelist set out like Abraham of old, hardly knowing whither he went, and surely not why. As he pursues his journey of faith, he espies the state chariot of the Ethiopian officer. The Spirit directs him to join himself to this chariot. Philip by his shrewd question put to the rider gains a seat alongside of him. Philip had certainly gone to the Samaritans under the influence of the Spirit. But we are not told so. That so much is made of the divine guidance in the case before us, is intended to show that God's plans were now reaching afar. Here was a man from a distant region. Ethiopia was stretching out her hands. Must not Philip reflect, when his ministry with this African was at an end, that not only were the Samaritans to hear the gospel and believe, but the ends of the earth also? The religious status of the Eunuch is not given. We do not know whether he was a Jew, a heathen, or a prose-

lyte. Since he was present at Jerusalem to worship, and was reading God's word, we may presume he was the latter. But this need not be discussed, for it is not the point. The story—and the Bible for that matter—is understood by attending to what it discloses, and by not spending time on what is purposely left obscure. The distant country and the rank of Philip's hearer are certain. He was a representative of a far-off land, whom God had chosen to hear the gospel message, and Philip could not fail to get the lesson. The gospel was intended for all the world.

We are clearly informed of the Eunuch's occupation at the time he is met. He was reading one of the clearest testimonies to the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures. And he could make nothing out of it. Philip would, of course, be encouraged to draw near when he found the prince thus engaged. But this could not account for the insertion here of the passage read. The reader was intent and earnest, and if such a man, with the Bible before his eyes, could not find the truth, how indispensable was the evangelist. This necessity would make itself plain to Philip as another lesson of the hour. It is just because the Eunuch needed the preacher rather than the preaching, that Philip's sermon is not put on record. The sermon was really in the text before the inquirer's eyes, but he must have a guide to see it. Hence we are told that he "began at the same Scripture and

preached unto him Jesus." The world then is to have the gospel, but it must get it from the preachers. For even with the Bible in his hand so intelligent a man as the Eunuch did not see the truth until the evangelist pointed it out.

A third fact made prominent in the story of the Eunuch is his baptism. It is a little strange that this is the first time in this book, and for that matter the first time in the New Testament, that the ordinance is described. Even with the thirty-seventh verse omitted as spurious, the act is set forth as in a picture. The chariot stood still, and "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him, and . . . they came up out of the water." Note upon what the emphasis is laid in this sentence. Its dual subject is mentioned four times—"they," "both," "both," "Philip and the Eunuch"—which is a fair representation of Luke's Greek. It is to be observed, too, that it was the Eunuch himself that proposed the baptism. And where did he learn its requirement? Philip had preached unto him Jesus, from a passage which predicted his death—"his life was taken away from the earth" (Rom. vi. 4). Now, with the facts fairly before us they seem to present two things: first, that the Eunuch's evangelization completed itself in his baptism. He proposed it himself as the appointed expression of his belief in what Philip had preached to him. The interpolated thirty-seventh verse, which makes the Eunuch say "I believe,"

is an impertinence. The baptism, or rather the proposal which culminated in the baptism, was the declaration of belief. Again, the baptism shows the completion and the success of Philip's mission to the Eunuch, so that it is immediately added: "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more." The evangelist must stay until both come from the waters of baptism, but he need not stay a moment longer. This ordinance then, so minutely described here for the first time, in a place that looks with both eyes into the Gentile world, shows how that world is to be pledged to Christ. It sets out the missionary's duty. He must preach Jesus and baptize such as believe in him.

The history of Saul's conversion follows. For the great work which is soon to begin there must be a fit and effective instrument. Saul has done his cruel work well in Jerusalem. But let him stay there if he wishes to continue it. The Lord will not interfere in the city that was soon to lose its place as center. But when Saul ventures abroad to check the work in the regions where the Lord has now sent it, the divine interference is immediate and direct. It was not without reason that Saul was arrested when on a journey to Damascus. In the voice that he hears twice: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," he learns the soul of his offending, and we get the key to his subsequent life and teaching, that Jesus is one with his follow-

ers. The proud persecutor goes humbly enough into Damascus. He must be led by the hand. In his three sightless days of fasting, he must have suffered, and he must have thought what no heart and brain but his could have endured. As the three days and nights in the tomb gave the world a Saviour, so these three days and nights gave the world its greatest preacher of that salvation. What questions Saul had to settle in this time! But what they were we are not told, and can only imagine.

Ananias is sent to Saul. The Lord always honors the means of salvation that he has established, and he does not himself invade their function. The story of the mission of Ananias to Saul is not unlike that of Philip to the Eunuch. Only there the man in the dark was reading and needed help, but in this case he is praying. Philip went willingly, Ananias hesitatingly. In both cases the Lord sent a minister to guide. The hesitation of Ananias shows how unexpected the conversion of Saul was, and how marvelous. The devout Ananias could not believe it. In the peremptory command for him to go there is given a reason which is in harmony with this whole section: Saul is a chosen vessel to bear the Lord's name "before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." The work so long delayed among the Jews is now to extend to the nations, for the man is selected and designated to effect it. He

is a Hellenist. He is thoroughly acquainted with the heathen. He is fitted by his education and temperament for it, and it is virtually said to be about to begin. For in predicting Saul's work, the Gentiles and kings, who were, of course, also heathen, are mentioned before Israel (ix. 15.) That he always spoke first to Israel when he went abroad on his missionary tours, does not lie against the statement before us. It is the aim of his ministry that is here defined, and not its order. That he was a chosen vessel is to be proved by what the Lord himself will call on him to endure. To be honored with much service for God always involves the additional honor of much suffering (Mark x. 38.) It must not be forgotten how startling was the statement made to Ananias that Saul was to carry the Lord's name to the Gentiles. It would perplex him. It was made for his benefit, and was not communicated at this time to Saul, who apparently did not learn what his field was until some years later (Acts xxii. 17-22.) Everything connected with Saul surprised Ananias. In some way he had learned of the persecutor's visit to Damascus, and of its cruel intent, and so, when ordered to go to him, he protests: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done." Saul was notorious. His every movement must have been watched by the saints. And the surprise and reluctance of Ananias show how far the Lord's leading here was ahead of the best man's expectation.

Saul was not the development of his times. He was one born out of time, and the times were prepared for him or in process of preparation.

Ananias visits Saul. He tenderly addresses him, and in the end baptizes him, after which, all questions being now settled, and Saul converted to the Lord, the long fast is broken, and the young saint takes food. One feature in the interview is peculiar. Saul receives the gift of the Holy Ghost, not at the hands of an apostle, but at the hands of Ananias, of whom there is no record of any official rank. "The Lord hath sent me that thou mightest be filled with the Holy Ghost," says Ananias. The instance is solitary in the New Testament. Its object is plain. Saul's ministry was in no wise to be dependent upon that of his fellow apostles, the twelve. He was not to be beholden to them for so striking a gift as the Holy Ghost. They might lay their hands on the Samaritans, but not on him, specially chosen by the Lord. And furthermore, this single instance shows that the power to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit did not inhere in an office, but pertained to the Lord himself, who might designate anyone to lay on hands.

Saul, unlike any new convert hitherto, preaches immediately, and effectively. His theme is different from that which was presented before. The proposition which Peter labored to establish was that Jesus was the Messiah. Saul's topic is that

Jesus is the Son of God (ix. 20). His preaching astonishes every one, which still goes to show that God's hand was in it directly. Such a change in such a man could not be explained by anything known to men. His sufferings begin early, but not immediately. Luke, in his phrase "after that many days were fulfilled," furnishes a place for the three years' visit to Arabia, and the return to Damascus (Gal. i. 17, 18). We need not raise the question whether Luke knew of this visit or not. It was on Saul's return from Arabia that Damascus was ready to destroy him. He goes to Jerusalem and has a cool reception (v. 26). Barnabas accredits him to the apostles, and shows how fully he is committed to the Lord Jesus in that he had preached in his name. An impostor, a feigned disciple could not do this, for from the Jew's point of view it was blasphemy, and would condemn even a pretender. In Jerusalem Saul speedily finds his way to his compatriots, the Grecians. But they who had stoned a Stephen would surely not keep their hands off of one whom they must regard a religious traitor. "They went about to slay him." There was no place for him in Judaism, even among the apostles, and hence, in perfect harmony with the whole story, we find him sent to the heathen cities Cæsarea and Tarsus, where for years he was "unknown by face unto the churches in Judea" (Gal. i. 22). God designed him for the Gentiles, and while Peter can find tolerance in

Jerusalem, everything about Saul is so ordered that his very life is in danger, except in heathendom. The divine intent for him so shaped his course that that intent was necessarily realized (I Cor. ix. 16, 17).

The section closes with an account of two stupendous miracles (ix. 32-43.) Why are they recorded here? And why were there none of this magnitude before? The palsy, semi-death, is vanquished and a corpse is re-tenanted by the departed soul. The answer suggests itself. The "greater works" that the apostles had been promised (John xiv. 12) were not given earlier because they had not earlier set about carrying out the Lord's command to preach everywhere. They were impossible while the gospel was confined to Jerusalem. The paragraph here has a significant beginning, easily overlooked—"And it came to pass as Peter passed throughout all quarters." These great works were the outcome of a ministry at large. And they are recorded to show that the gospel had not lost any of its power in going abroad. It had increased that power. Indeed the record shows a deeper, sweeter feature. The faith of the saints had increased, for it is they who on Dorcas' death send for Peter, to do the unheard-of thing of restoring her to life.

And thus the section closes. The gospel has spread, spread with a flow that promises to go much further than Judea, new laborers are pre-

pared, and God's hand, which has been manifest in the widening movement all along, is most powerfully manifest at the close. The dead are restored to life.

SECTION IX

PREPARATION OF THE CHURCH FOR THE ADMISSION OF THE GENTILES

Acts x. 1—xi. 18

The idea which runs through this section from beginning to end is preparation. Luke intends to show how all become fitted for the reception of the uncircumcised within the gospel fold. Cornelius and Peter were instructed about the same time, each by an appropriate vision. Peter and the six brethren who went with him to the house of Cornelius had every lingering doubt of God's will driven from their heart by the gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon the Gentiles. And now he and the brethren who accompanied him qualify the churches in Judea and Jerusalem by informing them of what God did, so that Jerusalem heartily exclaims: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (xi. 18). Before we look at the story several questions confront us. Why must Jerusalem and Judea have such overwhelming proof of the Lord's purpose to save the Gentiles? Has not Samaria been gladly welcomed among the Jewish believers? Has not the Eunuch been baptized? Has not Saul been converted that he may be sent to the Gentiles? But

the gulf between the Jews and the heathen was much wider and deeper than that between the Jews and the Samaritans. Judea had, to some extent, accepted Christ, but it had not rejected Moses, who forbade social and religious intercourse with the heathen. The separation was complete. It was not a matter of a day, but of centuries. It was worse than Hindu caste. The chasm between the blacks and the whites in this country is as nothing compared with that between Jew and Greek. The touch of the latter was defiling, his food was an abomination to the devout Israelite, and his religion blasphemy. How could the black man and the white man be made one to-day so that they might sit at the same table, so that their sons and daughters might intermarry, and so that both might drink from the same communion cup at the Lord's table? But he who should propose this in our time would have an easy task compared with the awful problem which confronted Peter. He knew that the Gentile was to be saved. The Old Testament declared it on every page. The Lord Jesus confirmed it. But how should it be accomplished? It was accomplished. The prejudices and convictions of ages gave way. The Jew had to haul down his banner before the Gentile, and admit him to the church as a brother. And he who knows what human nature is must admit that no earthly power could have solved the problem in a single generation. Only God could. The

revolution was bloodless, but history cannot point to a greater, wrought even by arms. It is little less marvelous than the resurrection of the dead.

But why should Cornelius be prepared by a vision for the change just at hand? Because, knowing Judaism as he did, how could he without divine guidance hope to enter its portals? If he had ever thought of such a boon, he must have looked with despair at the lofty walls that surrounded the sacred temple. But God comes to him. He directs him to send for the man who carried the keys of the kingdom. Cornelius is the first to knock at the door for entrance. He could not have ventured nigh without the command from heaven. Besides, it was every way best in such a case that the movement should commence with the excluded party. The Gentile was, after all, the sinner. If reconciliation is to be secured let the offender seek it. It will make it easier for Peter a few weeks hence in Jerusalem to say that he did not offer the gospel to the nations. God sent a man from among them to seek it. The movement began with God and not with Peter.

The story begins with a description of Cornelius. He was of pure Roman blood, as we gather from the statement that he belonged to the Italian band. This was his barrier to the kingdom, as well as the reason why he was selected to enter it. His disadvantage was his advantage. But while his nationality was against him, everything else was in

his favor. He was a man of earnest spirit. He revered Jehovah, and had led all his household to do the same. He was kind toward the Jews, giving them much in alms, and he observed the Jewish hours of daily prayer. If by birth he was a heathen, in heart and life he was equal to the best Jew. It was such a man that God chose to lead into the kingdom. Peter made special note of his character when he came to offer him the gospel (x. 35). The mouth of Jewish exclusiveness and prejudice could find no word to utter against Cornelius. Even bigotry must be dumb. The gospel was for the foulest heathen, as well as for the fairest. But the time for the vile was not yet ripe. The Lord did not tax his people too heavily when he offered them the first alien for their suffrage.

Why Cornelius had a vision of this character is not revealed. He may have been praying for an assured salvation. It is difficult to conceive that he was seeking an entrance to the church. He knew the obstacles. But he is greatly encouraged to send for Peter. First, he is assured that his pious deeds are acceptable. And in the instruction for finding Peter one word is thrown in that would help Cornelius. Peter was stopping with a "tanner" (v. 6), a business so ceremonially unclean that he who pursued it lived outside the city by the seaside. The soldier would be led by this word to feel that Peter was not the most rigid Jew, and that he might be approached. For Cornelius did

not know how thoroughly the Lord would prepare the apostle for the summons from Cæsarea Cornelius sent in pure faith in the divine vision, being convinced by it that Peter would tell him what he ought to do. He sent forthwith. He shows his regard for Peter by sending two from his household, and a devout soldier. But before he dispatches them they must be prepared for their strange mission. This was not a case like that in which another centurian could say: "I have soldiers under me, and I say to one go and he goeth" (Luke vii. 8). These had a common interest with their superior, and must plead their own in pleading his. And thus the three men set out, unconscious that they are the world's first missionaries for the heathen.

The next day Peter has his vision. The mid-day meal is delayed, it may be all the more because an apostle was to be dined. He is in prayer. Who knows but this very Gentile question was pressing itself upon his heart? Judea was evangelized, and the leading apostle has reached the very border of the sea that led out to the world. Where should he go next? Meanwhile his hunger increases, and gives shape to the visions of his head. What a trifle is a dinner. The tardiness in getting this particular one ready was an important factor in the world's salvation. Before God nothing is indifferent, and in the furtherance of his purpose the commonplace becomes sublime. The trance into which Peter fell was in line with the physical condition

in which he was. He saw food animals as well as others, and he heard a voice inviting him to slay and eat. But there was a deeper meaning. The very question to be settled was a social one, a question about eating. Equality is expressed nowhere so clearly as at the table. Peter and Cornelius were soon to sup at the same board. And the vision asks him to eat where clean and unclean are mingled. Two other things Peter would note. The great sheet came down out of heaven. It was offered to him from above. When the vision was over the sheet returned to heaven. Would this not say to him that men on either side of the code of Moses were now acceptable on high? The vision was repeated. Peter saw and heard three times. The voice was unmistakable—"What God hath cleansed that call not thou common or unclean." The repetition showed the exceeding importance of that which was signified.

While Peter is trying to solve the meaning of the trance the messengers from Cæsarea have found the house where he is stopping, and are inquiring for him. He gets another lesson. The Spirit bids him to go with them. In a matter so serious the chief actor must have the clearest light for his course. The messengers make their errand known, and in pleading the cause of their master drop one fact not given before. He is "of good report among all the nation of the Jews" (v. 22). If any heathen can be received among the Jews this was just

the men to select for that honor. Peter has no choice. He must go. But he cannot start that day, so that another strange thing occurs. He took into the house and lodged three Gentiles. Did he eat at the same table with them? The next day they set out on the journey to Cæsarea. But Peter does not go alone. In a matter of so much importance he takes witnesses with him, "certain brethren from Joppa." We learn subsequently their number was six. Is it at all significant that with Peter this made the number of Jews who went on this mission seven? In the meeting between the apostle and the soldier we see the most profound respect on the part of the latter. He meets Peter at a distance from the palace, and worships him. But that he learns better is seen later when he walks by his side and the two converse as equals until the house is reached. Here Peter meets a great company. "Many were gathered together." It must be observed that this Gentile Pentecost affected probably more persons than were present in the upper room at the Jewish Pentecost. At the latter the number was one hundred and twenty. With the family, the kinsmen, the servants and the devout soldiers that pertained to Cornelius we may well suppose that they exceeded one hundred and twenty. Peter begins by encouraging them. They know well that he is a Jew, but he assures them of what God has taught him. He will not look on his new, strange audience as

common or unclean, but he asks for a formal statement of the intent for which he was summoned. Cornelius' reply is already known except the conclusion. This is worthy of the man: "Now therefore we are all here present before God"—not present merely before God's minister—"to hear" —not to be entertained, then—"all"—let no part of the truth be withheld—"things that are commanded thee of God." He did not seek Peter's opinions, but God's will; which, he implies, Peter fully knows.

The sermon follows. It is simple and straightforward. Peter had no cavilers before him now. Luke introduces it with the statement: "Peter opened his mouth and said," a formula used when something formal and fundamental is about to be uttered (Matt. v.2, Acts ii. 14). After the introduction (vs. 34, 35) Peter presents first the life of Christ, up to the cross, summed up in one word: "He went about doing good," of which life the apostles were witnesses (vs. 36-39). Second, he declares that Jesus was raised from the dead, of which fact also the apostles were witnesses (vs. 40, 41). In the third place, the offices of Jesus are set forth with an apt quotation of Scripture, suited to the audience, that "whosoever" believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins. This prophetic word, as Abbott shows, gives us (a) the means, (b) the universality, (c) the condition, and (d) the nature of salvation. But Peter did not

wait until the end of his discourse to declare the all-embracing character of the salvation provided. He interjected it near the beginning, as is seen in the parenthetic sentence about the Messiah: "He is Lord of all" (v. 36). He belongs not to the Jews only, but also to the world.

The introduction needs careful attention. It can be easily misunderstood and has been misunderstood. Peter perceives "that in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted with him." Does Peter mean to say that Cornelius is already in a state of grace, so that his sins are forgiven and he is saved? In declaring his perception that Cornelius is accepted with God does Peter mean to teach that faith in Jesus is not indispensable to salvation, but that fear of God and righteous works constitute the ground of salvation? To affirm this is as illogical as it is unscriptural. The logic of the whole story is that Peter has been led to see that a man like Cornelius is acceptable in God's sight to hear the gospel. He is eligible to the kingdom. The fear of God and works of righteousness have not taken the place of Christ, but the place of Moses. If Peter had thought that none but Jews were acceptable candidates for the kingdom, he now sees that this company of Gentiles is also acceptable. Therefore he proceeds to offer them the gospel and the forgiveness of sins in Christ. And Cornelius could not misunderstand Peter's introduction, for in the

former's vision the angel had said to him: "Send for Simon, who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (xi. 14). From this he would learn that at length he was acceptable for that salvation which hitherto had not been preached to any but the chosen people.

Two things may be further noted in this introductory sentence in Peter's speech. He probably did not raise the question whether the noble soldier before him was a forgiven or an unforgiven man. He had nothing to do with that. Peter was not present in the character of a theologian. He only knew that his hearers had not believed in Christ, for never before had he been authoritatively presented to their faith. Peter came to offer him, he saw his hearers were fit subjects for the gospel, and this was the whole of his mission.

Another point to consider is that Peter's perception, unquestionably correct, as far as it went, was far from the whole truth. It is certain that he that fears God and works righteousness is acceptable with God, but acceptableness of this sort is not limited by moral worth. The lowest and the vilest Gentiles were also acceptable for the gospel (I Cor. i. 26-29; vi. 10, 11). Peter was not laying down a principle, only describing the case before him. The principle is found in the Scripture which he quoted at this time: "*whosoever* believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." But to have insisted on the widest interpretation of this inspired

sentence at this time, would have been impolitic. The conservative Jews might have taken fright. The widest interpretation was not necessary. None but the best Gentiles come before Peter for entrance to the kingdom, and he contents himself with saying that such are acceptable. Let a further development show that the baser sort may come too.

But while both Peter and Cornelius have been instructed by vision that before God the Gentiles are no longer "common or unclean," the six men who accompanied Peter have had no instruction. They receive it here in the house of the Gentile. While Peter is yet speaking, and before baptism has been administered, or the apostle's hands laid on, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles. The six brethren had not looked for this. They had not believed it possible, as their astonishment shows. Peter was no doubt now confirmed in the teaching of his vision, but he is not astonished, for he must have expected that the Spirit would be given. But the six brethren were to be convinced so that they might assist Peter in convincing others that God had accepted the Gentiles. And this is the reason that in this solitary instance the Holy Ghost was conferred before baptism. The Lord was leading his servants. "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them."

The large place which these six brethren hold in this story of the outpouring of the Spirit must not

be overlooked. They occupy almost the whole space. For whom else than they did Peter address in his challenge, "Can anyone forbid the water that these should not be baptized?" Surely his appeal was not to any Gentile present, but to them to whom he could say of these Gentiles: "They have received the Holy Ghost as well as we." And when he commanded the household of Cornelius to be baptized whom did he command but these six brethren? By their administration of the ordinance they show their own solemn conviction that God has also chosen the heathen.

It remains now that the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea should be led to accept the new state of affairs. The point at issue must not be overlooked. They heard that the Gentiles had received the word of God. Against this they had nothing to say. The Old Testament promised salvation to the heathen. Jesus had commanded that it should be offered, and the Jews had never objected. This, then, is not the point. Those who contended with Peter make their opposition clearly understood in their charge: "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (xi. 3). The apostle's offense was not that he had preached to Gentiles. It was not that he had admitted them to baptism. It was that he had elevated them to his own social level. It was not that he had gone outside of the Jewish fold to give the heathen religious aid. He had brought them

in and treated them as if they were of the same household. The Pharisees did not find fault with Jesus because he preached to publicans and sinners. They no doubt felt that these vile classes greatly needed moral instruction and bitter penitence. The Pharisees' hot complaint against the Saviour was: "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners" (Mark ii. 16, Luke xv. 2). The complaint against Peter is the same. He knew that it was "an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or to come unto one of another nation" (x. 28). But the vision from God had taught him not merely to give the gospel to the Gentiles, but fraternity. For the grace of the Lord Jesus not only puts away men's sins, but establishes brotherhood among them. They that have the same Spirit from God have the same rank before him.

To satisfy his Jewish brethren on this social question Peter relates fully how he came to enter the house of Cornelius. He does not fail to tell his offended hearers that the six brethren now standing with him had accompanied him into the Gentile's family. Of his sermon he gives no account, for it was not evidential. He only says that he began to speak (xi. 15) and passes at once to the fact that the Holy Ghost fell on the heathen. He adds his reflection at the time on this fact: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall

be baptized with the Holy Ghost." That is, he must have seen a significance in these words he never saw before. He cannot mean that he had not recalled them until this late day. For they must have occurred to him at Pentecost. They must have recurred to him in the city of Samaria. They must have been constantly with him in all the years of his ministry thus far. But in the gift of the Spirit bestowed on the heathen he saw what had not occurred to him earlier. The divine act in bestowing the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles opened Peter's eyes to a further meaning of the divine words about that gift. He saw that the antithesis between John's baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not lie in the material, so to speak, of the two acts, the one water, the other Spirit. The latter was vastly broader than the former. If John's baptism pertained to none but Jews, this could no longer be affirmed of the other baptism. Peter now saw that in the words "ye shall be baptized," the word "ye" could not be bounded by locality or nationality. It was as wide as the Lord was pleased to make it. It embraced all whom God was pleased to make his people. Peter thus sees another antithesis in the two baptisms, an antithesis not only in the material, but in the scope. John's baptism never went beyond the Jews. That which the Lord administered from on high was to be world wide.

And now Peter appeals to his Jewish opponents.

When God's Spirit was poured out upon the household of Cornelius, and they received the like gift as the Jews at the beginning, who was Peter, to resist or to deny (xi. 17)? If God made the Gentile equal with the Jew in his favor, would not Peter have denied the divinely given equality if he had refused the hospitality of Cornelius? It was but loyalty to God to eat under his roof. Peter says nothing now about the baptism of these Gentiles, for that is not in question. But so clearly has he vindicated his social act that his audience is convinced and admit that God has given "repentance unto life" to the heathen.

But it will be observed now that the Jewish believers are no more than prepared for the admission of the Gentiles. The right of the latter to the gospel is conceded. It has not yet wholly reached the practical stage. Jews and Gentiles met at the table on this one occasion, and then the former withdrew, and are back again among their circumcised brethren. And the Gentile believers constitute a community by themselves. We have not yet one body composed of Jews and Gentiles. That comes later, and it comes soon. But God has now surely taught the circumcised that saving grace is no longer to be confined to them. They are qualified for a broader work. The Gentile is to be received into the church not only without circumcision but also as a social equal.

SECTION X

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW RELIGIOUS CENTER

Acts xi. 19-30

In the spread of the gospel only a few religious centers were formed, from which the work extended to the outlying regions. These contiguous regions were, no doubt, soon filled with churches, but attention is mainly directed to the cities Jerusalem, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Rome. The section before us shows how the first of those outside of the Jewish capital became a center. Antioch grows almost as important as Jerusalem, whose leading apostle will soon disappear from view. It is every way new, new in character, new in its leaders, and here a new name is given to the followers of Jesus. A second center, and one of this nature, was necessary to the evangelization of the world. Jerusalem never started any missionaries to the heathen. A few were forced out. Antioch became the source of the evangelizing forces, and they were sent forth deliberately. Jerusalem was hampered by the Rabbinical yoke. Antioch was free. The education of Jerusalem, by its narrowing, restrictive influence, unfitted it for a diffusing source. Its sun shone but it had no rays. Antioch was cosmopolitan. It furnished the platform

from which all the world could be seen. It was adapted for that for which it was chosen. It was superior to Babylon because it was on the highway to the west, where the vigor and the life of the race had gone. Babylon was too far east. Antioch was superior to Alexandria, which was too Jewish, and too much addicted to speculative culture. It was superior to any of the great cities farther west, because it was contiguous to Judaism, and yet far enough removed that the narrowness and bigotry prevailing further south might not cramp it. The Holy Spirit spreads the truth, but he uses, as means, the men and the nations qualified for the work by position, by culture and by broad ideas. In modern missions why should the United States bear a more conspicuous part than Germany, which was Protestant centuries before we became a nation? Among other things the difference in political organization and spirit supplies the answer. A free church in a free state, where every man is the equal of every other man before the constitution, develops broad hearts, hearts that have leisure to attend to the world's needs. Sovereign grace is best made known by sovereign men. A city freer in its spirit than Antioch was not to be found in that day, and here God raised up the church that bore so honorable a part in giving the truth to the world. The text shows how this church was founded.

The persecution that arose about Stephen spread

the gospel into Judea and Samaria. The wave, however, did not stop there. Some of the scattered church of Jerusalem penetrate far north, to ancient Phœnicia, to the isle of Cyprus and to the heathen city on the Orontes. They did not offer the gospel to any but Jews. But some of this evangelizing company traveling north were Hellenists, Jews belonging to the isle of Cyprus and to distant Cyrene in Africa. The mention of their respective countries (xi. 20) at once explains their conduct. In these places so far away from Jerusalem, the rigidity of the Pharisee would not prevail. The heathen man would be better known and his natural virtues recognized. The men of Cyprus and Cyrene could not have been stiff in their Judaism. They were liberal in their feelings toward their uncircumcised neighbors. What Peter did not gain without a vision, to call no man common or unclean, these had learned by their surroundings in an alien land. Their unconscious training among the heathen schooled them for mission work among them. The persecution was started among the Hellenists at Jerusalem, and it scattered them. They now advance the gospel to a new sphere. They venture to speak for the first time to the uncircumcised. The word Grecians (v. 20) in our King James' version is a palpable error. It signifies Hellenists, that is, Jews born outside of Palestine, to speak to whom would have been nothing new. The gospel on Pentecost's day was spok-

en to the Grecians or Hellenists. But to speak to Greeks was to break over the Jewish barriers of separation. And all modern versions have the word Greek here, instead of the reading found in the King James', a reading condemned by the internal evidence.

The courageous act of the Cypriotes and Cyrenians meets at once with the divine approval. For a great number of heathen believed and turned to the Lord. And this may mean, though it cannot be urged, that no great success had attended the evangelists until they spoke to the heathen. But here the success was marked. So great was the work that Jerusalem hears of it (v. 22.) A messenger is sent forth to look after it. And here now we see how the Lord had ordered events that they might appear at the right time. He knew what was his own work in the north. He knew, too, that the report of it would reach Jerusalem. Hence there is given duly to Peter the vision at Cæsarea, and all connected with it, that Jerusalem may be fitted to receive the news from Antioch with equanimity. The vision did not fail in its intent, as is seen in the man selected by the mother church to inspect this work among the Gentiles. He is himself a Hellenist, a native of Cyprus, and a man of most liberal spirit. He is sent forth apparently without any instructions, except to go to Antioch.

When Barnabas arrives in Antioch there is nothing for him to alter, amend, or propose. He

recognizes at once that the work is the Lord's, and he is glad, and gives it his hearty endorsement, exhorting all to continue in the good way by cleaving to the Lord "with the purpose of the heart" (v. 23). To add to the value of his endorsement and to account for his unprejudiced verdict we are told that Barnabas was a man of high character, "a good man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." That such an one should commend this movement among the Gentiles shows that it must have been from God. His approval would have the very greatest weight at Jerusalem. But Barnabas did more than approve. His presence at Antioch, by its encouragement and sanction, multiplied the number of converts greatly, so that "much people was added to the Lord." Additional help was needed. And nothing goes further to prove that we have now reached a new center in the spread of the kingdom, than Barnabas' journey to Tarsus to seek out Saul. He did not go south for Peter or James, but north for the man whose life had been threatened in the very place where the chief apostle was honored. Antioch was surely very different from Jerusalem if it sought Saul and did not ask the aid of Peter.

With Saul's arrival in Antioch a year's instruction in the church was begun and accomplished. The new converts from heathenism would need no little training. At just this point two things are to be noticed. Luke calls this body of convert-

ed heathen a church, a name which he was slow to associate with the Jerusalem believers, and which up to this time has not, save once, (ix. 31) been connected with any other assembly. Neither the Samaritans nor those in the household of Cornelius are termed a church. But at Antioch the word comes promptly.

Again, at just this place a little sentence is written by Luke which affords much light: "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." But our King James' version here does not do Luke justice, and really violates his meaning by the punctuation. This sentence should not be separated by a period from what precedes. The Greek forbids it. Of six different modern translations examined, no one employs the period. Some punctuate with a semicolon, and some with what is still better, a comma. What Luke intends to convey is that Saul and Barnabas taught in the church for a year, and the disciples were called Christians. The name was a consequence of the teaching. Thomas Sheldon Green's rendering of this passage is: "And it came to pass with them, that they were combined even for a whole year in the church and taught much people, and that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." It came to pass with them, under their guidance of the church, that the distinctive title came about. It is wide of the mark to suppose that this worthy name by which these believers were called, was given in de-

rision by their heathen opponents. It would add nothing to ascertain who first applied the name. It was used here first. Its use shows a body of believers somewhat different from any who had preceded them. The disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem would not dare to employ this distinctive term. They needed no special designation. They were all Jews, Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah. But in Antioch we have a body who are not all Jews. The largest part are from the heathen. But unlike the Jews they have broken with their former supreme object of worship, and are no longer heathen. They have been led by the teaching of Saul and Barnabas into fellowship absolutely free from every former religion. They are not bound to their idol gods. They never were under Moses. They are a unique body, and a name was inevitable. And the new name is proof of a new body.

The section closes (xi. 27) with a beautiful picture of the benevolence of the church at Antioch. In proof of the newness of the believing community formed on the day of Pentecost, we had the story of the community of goods. Here we have substantially the same spirit and for the same purpose. This new community is genuinely new, for it parts with its goods. But while new and somewhat different, there is not a suspicion of a division between Antioch and Jerusalem. It is a prophet from the latter city who finds himself in the full exercise of his

function among these Gentile believers. They respond to his prediction with their help for Jerusalem, and Barnabas and Saul convey their bounty thither. The former has been a long time absent on his mission from the Jewish church. The material help which he brings back would be an effective report on the character of the work which he was sent to inspect.

SECTION XI

THE CHURCH IN CONFLICT WITH THE JEWISH STATE

Acts. xii. 1-24

The enthroned Lord has given his followers two signal victories so far. They have triumphed over religious persecution. They have burst the bonds of Pharisaic legalism, and established a church among the Gentiles. Their third trial is at hand. The state comes to notice them, and unsheathes its sword in opposition. Will the Lord deliver them from the enmity of the throne, as he did from the malice of the Sanhedrin? Nothing can withstand his purpose to establish his church in the world. The text shows how the disciples learned that they had nothing to fear from the might of the state. There are four points in the lesson: first, how securely Peter was imprisoned; second, minute details about his delivery; third, the hesitancy of the church to credit the reality of his escape, and fourth, the death of the king.

Little good was to be expected from the grandson of the great but bloody Herod. His half-sister Herodias secured the death of John the Baptist about seventeen years before this time. The executioner of the first martyr among the apostles, Herod Agrippa I. was in full sympathy with unre-

generate Judaism. The great council could not compass the death of one of the twelve, but the king can. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proposed to please them still more, by destroying Peter. It is especially noted that his cruelty was aimed at the "church." As to James' death the account is most meager. He is identified as the brother of John, and he died by being beheaded. Stephen's death occupies a large place in the record. For it was the pivot on which the course of the church turned. As James' death had no such result, a detailed account would be outside Luke's purpose in writing this book. We turn to Peter. If James' death was acceptable to Judaism, would not the chief apostle's be more so? And what was to hinder the destruction of all the leaders, one after another? And then what could the church do with its divinely appointed guides gone? But how does it happen that Peter should be arrested apparently at the beginning of the eight days' paschal feast? During this sacred week no executions could occur. Time was thus afforded the church for prayer and for reflection. At any other season Peter's life would have been prolonged but a few hours beyond the time of his arrest. But now he is certain to be spared for some days. The scrupulous care with which he was kept in jail made the divine intervention the more conspicuous. That Jesus' body was so carefully guarded in the tomb intensifies the certainty that it was not stolen

by his disciples. Peter had escaped once before from prison. This could not be forgotten. Four quaternions of soldiers are to make a second escape impossible. He was diligently guarded

The church could not fail to realize the sad condition in which it was placed. One apostle was dead; the chief one was held for death; when would it be the turn for a third? Prayer was all that was left, and prayer was inevitable. The specific thing for which they prayed is not given. The Lord had allowed the death of one of the original number. Might it not be his will that a second should be taken? Thick darkness confronted them. The last night before the fatal day had come. But this last night was the very best in which to make the lesson of God's helpful interference impressive. The black background makes the lines of the picture clearer.

Peter's delivery from Herod's prison is given with minute particularity: the stroke on his side, the lifting of him to his feet, his girdle, his sandals, his cloak, his passage out of his cell, his course through one guard after another, his exit from the prison through the iron gate into the city, his walk with the angel the distance of one square, and his recovery of full consciousness. His rescue on the former occasion is dispatched with a word (v. 19). Here we have every detail. The explanation is easy. The rescue was not the point there. Here we are concerned with nothing else more. If

Luke's object is to tell us how the Lord saved his own from the clutches of the state, we may anticipate that he will linger on the act of the delivery. It was in Peter's reflection on these items that he learned their import, that God had delivered him from Herod. Noyes translates the next verse (v. 12) not "when he had considered the thing," but "when he understood the matter." The details aided him to become fully conscious of their meaning. They taught him the Lord's intent.

The next step brings Peter to the house of Mary, who is identified as the mother of John Mark. Here again the story moves slowly until a picture is made. In this house many were assembled for prayer—apparently for the whole night. Peter knocks at the street door, and calls aloud. He had often been there before, for his voice is recognized by Rhoda, who came to hearken. Her name is given because she has a prominent part. As soon as she distinguished the familiar tone, in very joy, forgetting to open the gate, she bursts into the solemn, sad meeting with the wild exclamation that Peter stands without. They cannot believe it. They debate with Rhoda, and go so far as to charge her with madness. And when her positiveness wins a reluctant, halfway assent, they will only admit that it may be Peter's guardian angel in the likeness of Peter. Plainly they did not expect the apostle. If they were praying for his escape they

were not prepared for such an overwhelming answer to their petition. Whatever may have been the specific theme of their supplications, they had yet to learn that the Lord was as strong for them against the godless state, as he had been against the faithless council. They had to learn that the Lord could preserve them from the power of the latter. He has shown them now that he will protect them, not perhaps from the punishment, but certainly from the destruction threatened by the throne. And from that day to this it has remained so. A state may impede the truth within its borders; it cannot expel it.

When Peter is at last admitted to the midnight prayer meeting they must have looked upon him with as much wonder as if he had just arisen from the dead. He tells them the whole story of the Lord's mercy to him. But there is somewhere another anxious band, "James and the brethren"—perhaps more than one band. This James is, of course, not the apostle, but may be the one known as the Lord's brother. Peter directs that he and the rest be relieved of their anxiety by being informed of what occurred. They, too, must learn that the Lord was mightier than the state. And then he went into another place (v. 17). The indefiniteness of the last remark comes about because the writer is not so much concerned with Peter, who is now free from prison, as with the persecutor of Peter. Our attention is not to be given to the apostle, but to the king.

The death of the guards was certain to follow. They could not account for Peter's unclasped chains and vacant cell. Their execution emphasizes the inexplicable, divine power, and its secrecy in leading Peter out of the prison. Could they have given any reason for the prisoner's absence their lives might have been spared. They were examined, but in a court that could not for a moment admit any divine agency in evidence, they were sure of conviction as abettors in the escape. They served a hard master, one who opposed God, and they suffer for such alliance. And yet their death is to the discredit of the king. A more careful and serious examination of the case would have disclosed the fact that the guards were guiltless. Mary, the mother of John Mark, and a hundred others, could have told the royal officers how Peter got away from the king's prison. But doubtless they would not have been believed.

The feast of the Passover having now come to an end, Herod would return to Cæsarea. Here a question of politics engages his attention. The ancient country of Phœnicia had offended him. He had the advantage and must be conciliated. The right or the wrong in the case does not appear. The trouble was allayed by influence. By some means, whether material or not, does not appear, the offending party make the king's high officer their friend, and he brings his master around. The dependent province secures peace, and the

current of commercial interests flows unobstructed once more. This would please all parties, and the promoter of business must be honored. A day is fixed and the king addresses the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon. They know what will please him, and give him the adoration of a god, the honor which the Roman emperors received. He descended from the throne where he had just made his oration, a very ill man. In five days, if Josephus may be trusted, he dies a horrible death, "eaten of worms." No Jew would misunderstand a calamity of this kind. And the members of the church would not fail to interpret it aright. Men would say that the king dies in the course of nature. But the saints would know that he was removed by the vengeance of God, whose work was not to be thwarted by a Godless state official.

But it will be noted that it is not said that God's condemnation fell on Agrippa because he slew James and would have destroyed Peter. These base acts were but symptoms of a moral malady deeper down in the king's heart. The angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory (v. 23). He arrogated the divine prerogative. This was his crime, and the secret of his taking off. There is a place for the state in the affairs of men. It is so ordered. The powers that be are ordained of God. But the state exists, if not to promote, certainly not to hinder the work of the kingdom and the spread of the gospel. And

whenever the state or its officer stands in the way of the truth they are obnoxious. Herod was especially offensive in that he used the power given him for government in order to exalt himself. This is the teaching of the chapter. Men have not heeded it, just as they have failed to heed the lesson in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, just as they have failed to heed many another, but the lesson is plain, and ought to give heart to the missionary of whatever rank. It must have helped the saints then, for the very next note after the story of Herod's death is, "the word of God grew and multiplied" (v. 24). The church that had been checked by Herod's cruel work now resumed its function, and once more spread the truth.

SECTION XII

THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE GENTILES FORMALLY BEGUN

Acts xii. 25—xiv. 28

The church is at length prepared, after more than sixteen years, to begin formally and deliberately its work among the heathen. The Sanhedrin seems to have lost its power to hinder. The Jewish state will never again oppose. But, more than all, Jewish caste has been broken, and its prejudice driven to the rear so that it will not soon stand in the way again. A new center of gospel influence has been founded in Antioch. The religious thought of Jews under the power of the Spirit has found a new, a deeper, a broader channel. God is no longer the God of the Jews only. The world has put on a new face, because it has become the field of the divine grace.

This first regular work among the heathen was not very wide in its scope. It did not reach Rome. It did not reach Corinth or even Ephesus. It extended but a very few hundred miles beyond Saul's birthplace in Tarsus. In giving its history Luke shows how God promoted it from first to last, how it was carried on and how it was justified by the obstinacy of the Jews who were encountered in this

first missionary journey. Many other things come in incidentally.

The record of the first offer of the gospel to the world begins after the return of Saul and Barnabas from their visit of benevolence to Jerusalem. They bring back with them John Mark. These three set out to bear the light to the heathen.

The new center at Antioch was not without its gifts, prophets and teachers. A list of their names is given in which Barnabas stands first, and Saul last. The test of work gives men their rank, and the work which is to put Saul's name in the lead has not yet begun. To the other names certain little notes are added to identify them. Such notes are not needed with the mention of Barnabas and Saul, for with these two the record has long ago made us fully acquainted. It was while these five were ministering in the church (though the church is not mentioned) and fasting, that the Holy Ghost, no doubt by the mouth of one of the prophets among them, called Barnabas and Saul to their special work. By their fasting they may have been seeking the mind of the Lord about this very matter of a wider evangelization. But let the object of their abstemious devotion be what it may, the Lord made his will clearly known, and Barnabas and Saul are chosen to execute it. A second fast with prayer and imposition of hands follows, for the work is new and great. In their going forth Luke is careful to say that

they were sent not by the church, but by the Holy Spirit, who acted through his church. They do not stop at Seleucia, which is but sixteen miles from Antioch, and can be evangelized by the home church. They proceed to Cyprus and preach in the synagogues there. Of the result there is no record. But just here (v. 5) Luke tells us that John accompanied the missionaries to assist in the work. This information is necessary to understand some things occurring later. From Salamis the preachers proceed to the western end of the island. And here they encounter and vanquish their first obstacle. In the history of Simon Magus we have already anticipated what confronts us here. He who met Jesus, as well as Adam, at the beginning of his career, will, if it is possible, bar at the start the mission to the heathen. Elymas is recognized and addressed as the "child of the devil." Bunyan's pilgrim is far on his journey before he is assailed by Apollyon. But in the inspired narratives the Evil One is mostly found at the beginning of things. For these narratives are largely a history of combat with the Enemy of Souls.

Elymas is an apostate Jew. His name, Barjesus, or son of Jesus, is Jewish. It was this corrupt spirit which withstood Barnabas and Saul. The opposition from Jews encountered hitherto was at least conscientious. This was conscienceless and satanic. It would corrupt the island at its head. Sergius Paulus was a heathen, but he was

a thoughtful man. He sought to know the gospel, and the spirit of Satan in the Jewish sorcerer attempted to keep him in darkness. The Spirit of the Lord in Saul sends judgment upon the crafty enemy, but judgment tempered with mercy. He is to be blind only "for a season." The deputy is rescued from this enemy of righteousness. He believed. And it is said to his credit that when he saw what was done he was astonished, not at the miracle (viii, 13) but at the doctrine of the Lord (v. 12). For God's grace in the salvation of a sinner is more wonderful than all his works of judgment. And thus the Word starts to the world, crowned with a victory. The Lord, by the preaching of his truth, is superior to the spirit of corrupt Judaism. The triumph here is a pledge that perverts from the truth cannot hold those whom God has chosen to know the truth. Elymas may take a lofty name and call himself a son of Jesus, but the Spirit of the Lord unmasked him and allowed all to see that he was a deceiver in league with Satan.

In this story there lies a little parenthesis that cannot be overlooked. "Saul is also called Paul." The time when he showed the power with which he was endowed for the work among the Gentiles, is just the time to tell of the name by which he was known among the Gentiles. Saul is Hebrew. Paul is Hellenistic. How this latter name arose is unknown. From his youth the apostle may have been called both Saul and Paul. But what

is left so wholly in the dark would be of no value if clearly discovered. It is best to follow where the light leads. Jacob, when he drew near to God and became worthy of his patriarchal position, was called Israel. Simon, when called to the apostolic office, was called Peter. James and John got the designation of Boanerges. Joses, of the country of Cyprus, after he gave his property to the church, was never known by this name again. The disciples called him Barnabas. The believers at Antioch in becoming a new center were now called Christians. A change or an attainment seems to have been followed by a change in appellation. Paul in his encounter with Elymas rose up like a new man. He showed himself possessed of a power which he had not exhibited before. He enters the place here which the Lord intended him to fill, and here is just the place to tell of his new name. It indicates that a change had come in his life, and is mentioned to mark that change. Hence we find hereafter a reversal in the order of the names of these two. All along it has been Barnabas and Saul. Now it will be Paul and Barnabas. Indeed in the very next verse after the story about Elymas (v. 13) Paul's name stands alone as the center of a group no further designated. That Sergius had also the name Paulus has nothing whatever to do with the change. Paul in saving him from the power of the sorcerer showed as never before the gift that was in him, and his new name marks its first exhibition.

When the island is left and the mainland is reached at Perga, John leaves his fellow travelers and goes back to Jerusalem. Only the fact is mentioned here, not the motive of his return. We do not learn until later that one of the leaders did not consider that motive a worthy one.

Apparently the apostles do not preach the word in Perga until their return. They hasten on to Antioch, and now the account becomes very full. They enter the synagogue and are invited to speak. It is Paul and not Barnabas who complies. His first recorded sermon follows. It is recorded because now they have fully entered upon their new work, and the sermon shows by what arguments they sought to persuade men. The speech exhibits some likeness to that at Pentecost, but it has also some striking differences. Its leading thought is that God, in a series of changes increasing in helpfulness, has always provided for the good of his people—this series culminating in the gift of his Son. This progressive feature in the divine economy clearly marks Stephen's speech. It would have been very ill-timed in Peter's on the day of Pentecost. The points in the discourse before us are three:—

I. Proof from history:

(a) God chose and exalted the people (v. 17).

(b) He delivered them from Egypt (v. 17).

(c) He gave them a country (v. 18, 19).

(d) He provided judges (v. 20).

(e) At their request he gave them a king (v. 21).

(f) After removing him he raised up David, a man after his own heart (v. 22).

(g) From this man's seed sprang Jesus (v. 23).

II. That Jesus is a deliverer is proved:

(a) By the testimony of John (vs. 24, 25).

(b) By his rejection, which prophecy foretold (vs. 26-29).

(c) By his resurrection, a fact attested (1) by eye-witnesses (vs. 30-32) and (2) by Scripture (vs. 33-37).

III. The appeal.

(a) Encouragement (vs. 38, 39).

(b) Warning (vs. 40, 41).

It will be observed that in every act in this long series only God or his servants appear as agents, with two exceptions—the desire (v. 21) for a king, and the rejection of Jesus (v. 27). In these two cases Israel interfered to their confusion.

The apostle, in recalling the history of the Jews, inserts some notes of time. One of these, the length of Saul's reign, is given only here in the Bible. The length of the judges' reign presents a difficulty, when compared with the statement in I Kings vi. 1, that in the 480th year after the exodus, in the fourth year of his reign, Solomon founded the temple. If the judges ruled during 450 of these years, where are we to find time for the forty years in the wilderness, the twenty-five for Joshua's adminis-

tration, the forty for Saul and David each, and the four of Solomon's reign before the first stone in the temple was laid? It is possible that Paul referred to a system of chronology unknown to us. The difficulty has not been satisfactorily solved. The real question is, What did Paul mean by these notes of time? They help his hearers to appreciate the divine persistence in bringing deliverers to Israel. The work extended over long reigns and centuries. Without the mention of the years the hearer would not so readily get the notion of God's patient continuance in his helpful purpose.

In discussing the resurrection Paul does not mention his own experience, but that of the Galilean disciples. In his argument from Scripture he does not select the portions used by Peter at Pentecost. He uses two which have a broader range. Peter makes Jesus to be David's exalted Son. Paul's first passage makes him God's Son essentially, and the second connects him with David only as inheriting the promises made to the latter. The argument in both quotations is clear, but not at first sight obvious. In the first Paul relies on the words found in the second Psalm: "Thou art my son (because) this day have I begotten thee." If Jesus is God's Son, he must be begotten, that is, have life derived from the Father, have life imparted, and where else did he so certainly receive this life as when he lay dead in the tomb? As the Father's life is eternal, so is that which he

gave to Jesus after he surrendered on the cross that natural life received through Mary.

The other passage is simpler—"I will give you the sure mercies of David." This has been translated, "I will give to you the holy, the sure promises of David." The argument is that the character of those promises is such that they could not be made sure to one who possessed only mortal life. He must have eternal life, such life as resurrection imparts. The sum of the promises made to David was that he should have an heir to sit on his throne forever (II Sam. vii. 16, 25). To realize such a promise made it necessary that David's heir should rise from the dead, no more to die.

In the appeal we have, for the first time in the book, a contrast between Moses and Christ. In the latter all who believe are justified from all things. In the Law men could not be justified at all. It is the argument of the Epistle to the Galatians in a nutshell. It is safe to say this in distant Antioch, and at a time so far removed from Pentecost. It would have been imprudent for Peter to enunciate this truth in the beginning at Jerusalem. The motive held out then was that he who would receive Christ should also receive the Holy Spirit, and the Law of Moses was not mentioned.

Paul's sermon had its effect. Some Jews and proselytes believed, but the Gentiles were espe-

cially desirous to hear more. The next Sunday brought the town to the doors of the Synagogue. The dog in the manger spirit showed itself and Paul addressed himself to it. He declared that these envious Jews by their conduct had passed sentence against themselves, that they were unworthy of eternal life. This phrase, eternal life, occurs here for the first time in the book, and is confined to this particular story. It has often been shown hitherto that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Indeed that is the constant theme. But now as the work widens the thought expands, and here in the presence of this heathen throng it is at last clearly intimated that the believer participates in that everlasting life in which Jesus came from the tomb.

The apostles announce their purpose to direct their work now toward the Gentiles. In declaring that they are commanded to do so they quote not an injunction to that effect, but a word of Scripture which asserted that Christ belongs also to the Gentiles. They found their command from Christ on a prediction about him (v. 47). This was every way more forcible than to have said the Spirit sent them forth to the Gentiles. For this might have been denied by their faithless Jewish hearers, who could not so readily fly in the face of a quotation from their own Law.

The Gentiles hail the offer of the gospel. They glorified the word of the Lord. It is plainly Luke's

intent by such statements about their generous receptivity and the corresponding statement about the Jews' obstinacy to justify the mission to the heathen. But here we meet with an assertion that arrests attention—they that were ordained to eternal life believed (v. 48). It need not be asked who ordained these who believed, or when they were ordained. To ordain implies, of course, some competent agent, and the ordination preceded the faith of these disciples and set the limit to their number. But these are not the questions to consider here, for they are not considered in the account. But why should this startling statement be made at this particular point of time? Why does not Luke content himself with saying, as in similar cases before, "they became obedient to the faith" (vi. 7) or "the Lord added such as should be saved" (ii. 47)? And is it not true that all along until this time only those who were ordained to life believed? Why mention the fact here for the first time? The gospel has been preached to the Gentiles before. But this is the first time that it was formally offered and at the direction of God. The missionaries turn deliberately from Israel as unworthy of eternal life, and begin unmistakably the work among the heathen. The Rubicon is no longer before them, it is crossed and the gospel stands at length on the side toward Rome. The gospel has gone to the Gentiles; will all Gentiles accept it? The question could not be answered, even by Paul and

Barnabas, without experience. And experience came here in Antioch of Pisidia, and it is decisive. In spite of the kindly attitude of the heathen toward Christ, they did not all accept him. And the preachers learn, and their historian records that we may learn, how the work will proceed among those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Only an elect, ordained number will be saved. The rest, like the mass of the Jews, will refuse the offer of mercy. We knew before that Israel as a nation would reject the Messiah. Antioch in Pisidia was the first place to show that only selected ones among the Gentiles would accept the Messiah. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but. . . . these have known that thou hast sent me" (Jno. xvii. 26).

When the Gentiles gave their favor to Paul and Barnabas, there was nothing to hinder the spread of the gospel in all that region. But human consent is no shield to the truth. The approval of the majority cannot sustain the preacher, or Jesus would never have been crucified. The malignance of the Jews drives Paul and Barnabas from the entrenchment of their friends, and they leave Antioch. Since here the gospel makes its first clean break with the Jews, here first we have the ceremony of shaking the dust from the feet for a testimony against the opposition (v. 51). Jesus has prescribed this sign of his abhorrence, and the place was at last reached where it could be solemnly

exhibited. But though the evangelists must depart their work remains, for the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost (v. 52).

Paul and Barnabas are next found in Iconium. The scenes at Antioch are re-enacted here with two variations. The record does not dwell on the success of the work, great as it was, but on the opposition. This came, as before, from the Jews, but now they secured the evil help of the Gentiles. This would furnish the missionaries an additional proof that the Gentiles as a body could not be relied on to accept the good news. Indeed they are represented in Iconium as rather worse than the Jews. If the latter are charged with exciting them to evil, it is the Gentiles who are represented as leading in the purpose to stone the missionaries (xiv. 5). The other feature in which the work differed here from that in Antioch, is that miracles attended it. Plainly, the opposition in Iconium was very bitter, much more so than in the former city, and so the Lord's help was more abundant. "He gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done" (xiv. 3). The missionaries left Antioch openly, but here they had to fly for their lives. We find them next in the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe.

In Lystra a new difficulty is met. God's gracious power exhibited in a miracle is turned against him and the missionaries are declared to be gods. Judaism had done little better. When Jesus fed

the multitude of five thousand, instead of bowing to the truth they attempted to force a crown on Jesus' head.

A well known, inveterate cripple lived at Lystra. How often he had heard the preaching we know not, but apparently more than once, for sufficient time had elapsed for the populace to observe that Paul was the "chief speaker." Something in the mien of the lame man convinced the missionary that he trusted the Saviour. With a loud voice, so that all might hear, Paul called to the lame man to stand upright. The healing was instant and the lame man leaped up and walked about. Paul must have preached in the Greek language. The heathen audience responded to the miracle in their own tongue doubtless, which the apostle did not understand, or he and Barnabas would have rejected the proffered honors on the spot, without waiting until the sacrifice of oxen and garlands was prepared. Paul and Barnabas with earnest Oriental protestations persuaded the people from their purpose. The speech (vs. 14-17) is the germ of the address made four years later on Mars' Hill. After denying that they are divine beings, the missionaries state their object, to turn their hearers from these vain dead idols to the living God. He is declared to be the creator of all things. His long-suffering is asserted. His beneficence in giving rains from heaven and fruitful seasons is shown to be a witness to his existence and character. The speech scarcely gained its end.

And now the Jews behave worse than ever. This is the culmination of their spite, and we are shown that a satanic worship can be outdone by a satanic hate. Paul has withstood idolatry, but Jews who profess abhorrence of it come all the way from distant Antioch in Pisidia and from Iconium and join these idolaters, and incite them to stone the man who would turn them from idols. Surely Israel has judged itself unworthy of eternal life, and the gospel is vindicated in going to the heathen.

The mob led by Jews was not as successful in its attempt against Paul's life as it supposed itself to be. After it had dispersed, the disciples remaining with the apparently lifeless body were surely overjoyed to see their teacher recover consciousness, and rise to his feet. God had spared him from the fury of the mob. It must have been by some secret means that he ventured back into the city and took a night's rest after his pains and bruises.

Luke makes no note of anything special at Derbe. After they taught many there, the missionaries revisit the cities which they had evangelized. The object of this second visit was to insure the permanence of their work. The means to this end is just simply instruction. The apostles teach the churches themselves and then appoint from the membership elders to continue the instruction after the apostles have left. In the months in-

tervening between the first and second visit the churches had been left to themselves. In this time it would become apparent in each body who had gifts of leadership. Such men Paul and Barnabas would designate for the spiritual oversight of the church, and after a season of prayer and fasting with the entire membership, all were entrusted to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Luke having now fully exhibited the work of the first mission journey, with a few rapid strokes (vs. 24-26) brings the apostles back to Antioch in Syria. He makes but one note. Perga, where the evangelists did not stop in the outward course, was evangelized on the return homeward. On reaching home they call the church together and report what God had done with them, as a proof that the door to the Gentiles was divinely opened. Luke gives no hint of the manner in which the report was received, for this does not concern him here. And now the faithful, heroic missionaries make a long sojourn among their friends.

SECTION XIII

THE CONDITIONS OF SALVATION FOR THE GENTILES SETTLED

Acts xv. 1-35

The church, which had its beginning among the Jews at Jerusalem, has now not only spread among the heathen, but has long been admitting them to membership with no other condition than faith in Jesus Christ. It is generally conceded that the history has now reached the year 50 A. D., about twenty-one years after Pentecost. A change in sentiment in so short a time and so stupendous, in which Jew and Gentile become brothers, is without a parallel in history. That a reaction should ensue is not strange. And yet the case before us is hardly a reaction. It might have been supposed that the vision seen by Peter at Joppa settled the terms of the Gentiles' admission to the church. On the report of it and of the conversion of the household of Cornelius, the brethren in Jerusalem joyfully exclaimed, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (xi. 18). But it will be remembered that all this was, in Peter's own language, "a good while ago" (xv. 7). Apparently fifteen years had elapsed. A new generation had come into the church at Jerusalem. They had not heard

Peter's report of his experience at Cæsarea, though they must have heard about it. They needed information.

Again the question in form was somewhat different now from that which had been determined fifteen years before. Then it was settled that God had granted life to the Gentiles. Now the church decides on what grounds they can be saved. The former question does not once appear in the deliberations at this time in Jerusalem. The brethren are wholly concerned with the conditions on which the Gentiles can be assured of eternal life. To keep this distinctly in view furnishes a key to the entire debate which ensued.

The question arose at an opportune time. Paul and Barnabas had returned from the marvelous work which God did with them on their first missionary tour. They were in Antioch of Syria and confronted the men who had come down from Judea to teach in the church that circumcision was necessary to salvation. That Paul and Barnabas, after long disputation, were unable to silence these teachers shows that the question at issue was neither obvious nor absurd. The foreign missionaries could not silence their Judean opponents. The reason is plain. The Scriptures were all on the side of the latter. To be sure, these Scriptures everywhere promised salvation to the heathen. No one disputed this. But these same Scriptures were just as explicit in making circumcision the

condition of God's favor toward man. If Paul could plead that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, his antagonist could say, yes, but after justification the rite was divinely imposed. The inference would be that the justified Gentiles now in the church should follow Abraham as an example and receive the same sign. The covenant with the patriarch as it stands in our seventeenth chapter of Genesis was positive, concluding with the solemn words: "the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen. xvii. 14). It was an ordinance "forever." The patriarch administered it to his whole household, including Ishmael, to "every male among the men of Abraham's house." And on what Scripture ground could the Gentiles whom Paul had led to Christ refuse the token of the covenant? Moreover without this token they were coming into the church with a decided advantage over the Jew. They were under no ceremonial restraint. And yet while the Old Testament unequivocally held out the hope of Messianic benefit to the heathen, it invariably teaches that when that hope came to fruition they were to occupy a subordinate place in the kingdom. Isaiah predicted to the Jew that the sons of the alien should be his plowmen and vinedressers, "but ye shall be named the priests of the Lord" (lxi. 5, 6). Zechariah prophesied that in the coming time "the Lord

will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (xiv. 18). They must be subject to this Jewish feast. So constantly is the superiority of the Jew promised in the Old Testament, that Paul in writing to the Romans must carefully defend the church order in which the Gentile is on a par with the Jew, if not his superior. If the gospel is to rub out all ceremonial distinctions and establish a universal religious level, the question "What advantage then hath the Jew?" was inevitable. In writing to Rome Paul argues through three chapters (ix, x, xi) to answer it. And, looked at from this point of view, this is the question now before the meeting in Jerusalem, and it is answered, at least in James' speech, substantially as Paul replies to it in the epistle to the Romans (xi. 25-27). The problem was to save both the liberty of the gospel and the authority of the Scriptures. Antioch stood for the former, the teachers who came down from Jerusalem for the latter. God's Spirit harmonized the two.

Since unanimity of sentiment could not be reached on the Orontes, "they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up unto the apostles and elders about this question." Mark, it is not said that they were sent to the apostles and elders that these officers might settle the question. The Lord had not committed the guidance of the church affairs to men. The delegates travel through the heathen country 'Phœnicia'

and the semi-heathen country, Samaria; for had they journeyed on Jewish soil their report from heathendom might not have been so acceptable. On arriving at the Jewish capital they are formally received by the church and its leaders. Paul and Barnabas report their work among the heathen. A number of Jewish believers who were Pharisees, at once threw down the gauntlet in declaring "that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses." Whether these were genuine believers we need not inquire. They were certainly sincere and conscientious. The question about their faith would not arise were it not that Paul, in all probability writing afterward about this very meeting, calls some of its members "false brethren" (Gal. ii. 1-5). To all appearance, too, the men who precipitated the question now in Jerusalem were not the men who started the strife at Antioch.

At this stage, as it would seem, the meeting adjourned to come together subsequently. Of this second session it is said the apostles and elders came together. The church is not mentioned. But the leaders include the followers, for the subsequent acts of this second meeting make it certain that the whole body of believers participated in them. The session opens with a long debate. There was much disputing. The Pharisees had abundant arguments and they found full liberty to present them. They were in no official position,

but they had a voice in the deliberations, and, so far, an equal standing with everyone else present. Peter arose. Will he decide by his apostolic authority? No, he also resorts to argument. And it is very simple. He recalls the fact of his visit to Cornelius, but with the direct assertion that God sent him, that by his mouth the Gentiles might hear the word of the gospel and believe (v. 7). Then comes the proof proper—God bore witness to his acceptance of the Gentiles as Gentiles in that he gave them the Holy Spirit. This bestowal was sunlight evidence of the divine will. To deny it was to tempt God. The outpouring of the Spirit in the house of Cornelius blotted out the distinctive mark between Jew and Gentile, so that there was "no difference." This gift settled the question, so that it was no longer a matter of debate. God had long ago shown his mind. But Peter makes two points further, which also show how reasonable God's decree in the case is: first, why ask the Gentiles to submit to a system which the Jew in all history was unable to endure, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." Such a demand upon the heathen was certainly indefensible, not to say cruel. Again, Peter shows that the very Jews who had the system comprehended under circumcision had to abandon it as an inadequate means of justification, and believe in order to be saved. Virtually, they had to become Gentiles so far themselves, and trust to the grace

of the Lord, even as the Gentiles. Circumcision was inadequate as a condition of eternal life.

Peter's argument must have stopped every mouth. His question, "Why tempt ye God?" after he has so clearly shown his will in the gift to Cornelius, must have tied every tongue. Peter's speech is worthy of note in what it does not say. He never once mentions the vision of the sheet let down from heaven, and the thrice repeated voice which he heard, "What God has cleansed that call not thou common or unclean." The reason for his silence here is clear enough. His personal vision was primarily for himself. It was intended to convince him. But what God did publicly in the effusion of the Spirit in Cæsarea, was for the public. It could not be denied. It was an argument so mighty that no other was needed. Again, Peter does not stop to harmonize the stand which he has taken with what the Scriptures promised the Jew. His position plainly is that what God's Word says must be learned in the light of what God does. The divine act is a higher court than the divine record. For while God, when understood, is never contrary to his Word, he is before his Word, and above his Word, and the ultimate interpreter of that Word. In all this Peter was not without the very highest precedent. The wily Pharisees had laid a cunning snare for Jesus in the question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife" (Mark x. 2). If he says, yes, in agreement with

Moses (Deut. xxiv. 1, 2), he will be in conflict, not only with his own forerunner, who lost his life for his reproof of Herod on this point, but in conflict also with the best sentiment of his own times, the sentiment which John reflected. If Jesus says no, do not put away a wife, the Pharisees are sure to retort, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away?" (Matt. xix. 7). But the way out of this dilemma lay open before the divine Teacher. He appeals to God's *act* in the beginning, who made one man and one woman, and thereby indicated his will. Moses' law of divorce was not in conflict with this, did not annul the legislation indicated in creation, but served only as a restraint on men who would not accept the monogamous relation. Peter followed this method effectively before the Pharisees, who, we may be sure, pleaded God's Word as a proof that the Gentiles must be circumcised. Only he did not go as far as Jesus, in that he did not take up the other side. Peter does not declare the office of circumcision. Indeed this was not shown in this meeting. Paul's epistles first make it plain (Rom. iv. 11).

And here we see now clearer than ever why Peter did not refer to his wonderful vision in which he heard the command, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat;" "what God has cleansed that call not thou common." All this was outside the scope of the argument from God's act, the argument which Peter used. It

would have been no proof at all to place what God said in the vision against what he said in his Word about circumcision. Both statements must be explained by the ultimate revelation of his will in the gift of his Spirit to Cornelius.

Peter's speech induced silence, and gave the ears of the assembly to Barnabas and Paul. The Pharisees could object no longer. If they were not convinced, Peter had at least stopped their mouths. The missionaries' speech is of precisely the same character as that of the chief of the apostles. They did not say they had gone to the heathen by the direct command of the Holy Spirit. Their argument is of the same sort as Peter's and exactly in the same line. "They declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." That God attended their work with supernatural manifestations of his power was his unmistakable approval of that work. His acts indicated his will. It will be observed here that the names of the two foreign missionaries revert to their old order, and we read again Barnabas and Paul. We are in Jerusalem, where the new order divinely instituted in the encounter with Elymas at far away Paphos, has not had opportunity to take root. That first place which the son of consolation had gained before he left Judea, years ago, awaits him on his return. This is but a trifle, but it has immense weight in the proof of the genuineness and authenticity of this story. A forger could scarcely have thought of this trifle.

James follows Barnabas and Paul. His speech presents the first difficulty found in studying the minutes of this meeting. It is a double difficulty. In the first place he resorts to what the Scriptures say, after Peter's superior argument from what God has done in the matter in question. Must we then say the weaker argument came in last? But worse than all, when James' quotation from Amos is considered it does not appear to bear on the subject of debate. It predicts the salvation of the heathen, which no one in this meeting denied, but says not one word about the condition on which that salvation was to be offered, which was the very matter in dispute. Furthermore, its leaning is toward the Pharisaic side in that it at least implies that the Gentiles are to be saved in subordination to the Jews. The house of David is to be reared up that the residue of men might seek the Lord. But restoring the house of David involved the restoration of Israel along with it, and so the Gentiles would come in second to Israel.

But why should it be assumed that James is supporting Peter's speech, that was in itself conclusive, and that carried the day? "All the multitude kept silence." And how does James support Peter's speech with a passage of Scripture that does not touch the debated point? All difficulties vanish when it is seen what James is after. The Pharisees were silenced; they needed to be soothed. The Scripture was still on their side, and though

they could not reply to Peter, what should they do with that Scripture? It is not the way of the New Testament to leave earnest, honest men in such a state of perplexity. James proposes to show that all Scripture which the Pharisees might cite in favor of Jewish superiority and supremacy, was relevant, but not relevant at this time—not relevant in the state of things which God's Spirit had now surely brought about, putting Jew and Gentile on the same level. He begins by a startling interpretation of Peter's words: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles"—for what? To take the whole of them as is everywhere contemplated in the Old Testament? No, but to "take *out* of them a people for his name," a selected number, a discrimination of which the Old Testament gave no hint. The hardest thing for a patriotic but half-enlightened Jewish believer to accept was this prediction of Jesus now surely coming to pass: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43). Israel's day was ending in darkness. They had rejected the Messiah, who, now enthroned, was saving neither the nation of Israel nor any other nation. He was creating a new nation composed of individual believers from all nations. Peter in his first epistle expands this very idea. He addresses the saints as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," as a "chosen generation," as a "holy nation." He

is not interpreting the idea of the Old Testament. The Old Testament does not contain this idea—an elect body of believers composed of Jews and Gentiles on an equality, or, in other words, a church. This conception was first given to Paul by revelation. He must have got it before he ever set out to evangelize the heathen. He declares that "in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men," that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. iii. 5, 6). Now, the former ages knew very well that the Gentiles should be saved, and the prophets of those ages clearly predicted the fact. But they did not know of the birth of a church meanwhile in which Israel was to have no special distinction, because in this church Gentiles were "fellow heirs and of the same body" (Eph. iii 6). James says that Peter is declaring this new and unpredicted thing. And since the Old Testament did not contemplate it, how could quotations from that source be found to bear on it?

But Paul (Rom. xvi. 25, 26) seems to teach that this was foretold. The passage reads:—"The revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now is made manifest and by the Scriptures of the prophets (is) made known." But can Paul contradict himself in one and the same breath? Can he declare that a thing has been kept secret, "secret since the world began,"

and then at once assert that it is made known "in the Scriptures of the prophets?" The rendering is at fault, both in the King James' and in the Revised version. The word "prophet" is not in the original, neither the article "the". T. S. Green's translation (Twofold New Test.) is correct:—"according to the revealing of the mystery hushed in all time but now manifested and through prophetic Scriptures made known." Paul is referring to his own writings and dignifies them with the epithet "prophetic." In the Epistle to the Ephesians (iii. 3,4) he calls especial attention to a letter of his on this point. Rightly interpreted, not only does all contradiction disappear from the passage in Romans, and the word "now" get significance, but the passage itself declares that that relation of Jew and Gentile which confronted the founders of the church was first revealed to them.

When Peter's speech is explained and its significance shown, James brings in his quotation:—"after these things I will return," etc. After what things? for the original is plural. After God's elective visit to the nations, and his creation of a church. It is not after the days of Amos but after the days of Israel's rejection and desolation and of a completed church. For the prophet did not use the words "after these things." They appear to belong to James. They are his explanation of the prediction in so far as they show to what period it applies. The time had not yet come for the ful-

fillment of this prediction. When the church has reached its complement then the Lord will return from visiting the Gentiles and rear up the fallen house of David, when not an elect number merely, but "all the Gentiles" shall seek the Lord, a blessing still in the future. Now this would satisfy the Pharisees. They were satisfied, for the meeting came to a unanimous verdict. They could see how James' interpretation of Peter's speech "agreed" with the words of the prophets, of whom, however, he quoted but one. The agreement consisted in this, that there was no conflict when all Scripture was properly referred. If the quotation from Amos said nothing about circumcision, the very thing that had caused the present dissension, why, no matter. Amos was not speaking of the present, and that is all that James set out to show. When the time foretold by Amos dawns, it will bring the light in which to solve the discussions that such a period may awaken.

The words of Amos conclude with the assertion that the Lord does these things. The readings vary, but this is the sense of any of them. Now, for James to quote such words in the sense that the Lord would save the Gentiles, is pointless. But to quote them as indicating that the Lord was gathering out a church was to claim a divine foundation for it, and to put the passage in accord with James' interpretation of Peter. Scripture was not needed to prove Gentile salvation, but it

was helpful to say that the Lord was the author of such a state of things as had arisen among the believers, in which Jew and Gentile were not distinguished.

James now proposes the resolution which carries. His language is consistent with his insight into Peter's speech. He does not say, Let us not trouble the Gentiles, but, Let us not trouble them which from "among the Gentiles" are turning to God. And the principle having been now settled, James proposes, as a matter of policy, that the Gentile believers be instructed to abstain from meat that had been used in idol worship, from blood, and from fornication. This inhibition was made in deference to the Jews. Moses, read every Sabbath day in the synagogue, forbade such things. And the conscience of those who followed him in rites must not be offended by those who followed Christ. A singular feature in James' resolution is that it includes one positive sin with matters that are in themselves indifferent. He forbids a moral breach along with others that are only ceremonial. But the solution is easy. The Greeks did not look with the Jew's abhorrence upon fornication. The sin was so common among the heathen that they had lost all conscience about it. And in the prohibition now laid upon them they would not feel any theological difficulty. The things which they must observe would be to them alike ceremonial or alike moral. The distinction would not appear.

In sending messengers and the circular letter to the churches among the Gentiles, everybody concurred. The record declares: "Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church" (v. 22). But there is some question whether the letter itself bore the names of any but the apostles and elders. In our King James' version it begins: "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting." But some textual critics hold that the second "and" is an interpolation, and ought to be rejected from the reading. The recent Revision, with others, makes the verse read: "the apostles and elder brethren." The King James' reading has not the weightiest manuscript authority in its favor. But, on the other hand, Thomas Sheldon Green admits the word in translating the phrase, "the apostles and the elders and the brethren." Meyer, in his commentary, says the "and" was dropped from the manuscripts for "hierarchical" reasons. Internal evidence is all in its favor. The whole story shows that the church acted. In the debate no one spoke as an officer. Even the chief of the apostles was not called Peter while on the floor, but Simeon, his personal name. Moreover, to make the letter the words of none but apostles and elders or elder brethren introduces into it contradiction and confusion. They say that those who caused the trouble in Antioch "went out from us." Went out from the apostles and elders? Again in the twenty-fifth verse, which the Revision

renders: "It seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send to you—" in this verse do the apostles and elders claim that they sent out the messengers? But we are unmistakably informed in the twenty-second verse that these messengers were sent by the church as well. And did only the apostles and elders "come to one accord?" There never was any discord among them. The difference of opinion was among the brethren. To all appearances the "and" ought to be retained. The letter was from the church in Jerusalem. But few notes are needed on the letter itself. It is fraternally addressed to the "brethren" that are of the Gentiles. In it we learn for the first time of churches in Cilicia, Paul's native country. The letter asserts in plain words that while the troublers of Antioch came from Jerusalem, they were not sent by the church. They had no credentials but their own mistaken zeal. The letter asserts, too, that unanimity of sentiment was reached in considering the question at issue, and calls Barnabas and Paul—note the order again—"beloved," and speaks of them and their missionary work in the very highest terms. Judas and Silas go along to attest the letter and to confirm its sentiments. And just before the words of the decree, in the quietest manner possible, the letter gleams with a phrase every way sublime:—"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." These words (xv. 28) place the church with

its leaders on the same high throne occupied by the august third Person in the Godhead. They legislated along with him, conscious of their exalted dignity and divine fellowship. This phrase stamps the letter with all authority.

The two chosen men, with Paul and Barnabas, quickly reach Antioch. All were no doubt glad that that which has disturbed the Gentile brethren was settled at the local source of the evil. Jerusalem and Antioch were now one in sentiment. The delivery of the letter brought joy and consolation to those to whom it first came. Judas and Silas exhorted. Their theme can only be surmised. Possibly they entreated the church to observe with scrupulous care the things enjoined in the letter from Jerusalem. When their mission was accomplished they both returned to Jerusalem, as the thirty-third verse discloses. The thirty-fourth verse is spurious. It crept in to account for that presence of Silas in Antioch mentioned in the fortieth verse. Without the thirty-fourth verse it may be reasonably assumed that as soon as Silas had made his report to the church in Jerusalem he returned to Antioch.

The section closes with the statement that Paul and Barnabas, in connection with many other teachers, now spent some time peacefully instructing the saints in Antioch. There is no further note here of the success that always follows a stage gained in the progress of the church. That note

comes in logically further on (xvi. 5) and is not forgotten. The "many others" who assisted Paul and Barnabas in Antioch suggest the size of the church, the value of teaching those who have believed, and the disproportion between the number of those who remained at home to preach the gospel, and of those who went abroad.

SECTION XIV

THE GOSPEL IN TRIUMPHANT CONFLICT WITH HEATHENISM

Acts. xv. 36—xviii. 22

The inspired writer has now led to the point where the church is established and its character determined. He has showed the successive stages by which this consummation was reached. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit the ascended Lord has brought Jew and Gentile into one body, united by nothing but the common possession of the Spirit, and having no head but himself. It only remains to tell how this body spread abroad and became the light of the world. It came to its full growth not in Jerusalem, but in Antioch, whose church now is the model of all the rest. Peter has been mentioned for the last time in the story. Jerusalem and James recede, and Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, comes to occupy the whole field.

In this section Luke shows how the gospel burst its Asiatic limits and entered Europe. The Lord clearly led. He delivers his ministers from various forms of persecution, he brings the truth face to face with the world's highest wisdom, developed by the Grecian philosophers, and finally establishes that truth unmolested in distant Corinth.

There is an air of triumph, of success in the piece. There are no long speeches, little about work, but much about dangerous situations from which the Lord delivers his servants.

This second missionary tour, covering the years from 51 to 54, does not come about as the first one did. There God spoke and ordered. Here man proposed. Paul said to Barnabas, Let us go (xv. 36). The dissension which arose between them and led to a separation, serves to show how God can carry on his work in spite of human frailty. It is in vain to inquire who was to blame in this difference of opinion. That point is not even hinted at in the story. Mark's failure some years earlier (xiii. 13) was the occasion of this separation of chief friends. But though they separated, God's work went on. Barnabas took Mark and set out and neither of them is mentioned again in the book. This leaves Paul without a fellow traveler. He selects Silas, and goes away with the blessing of the church. The contention was earnest, each held tenaciously to his view, but it was not acrimonious. It did not spread into the church, perhaps the church did not learn much about it, nor did it destroy the friendship of the persons engaged in the contention. Only where God's Spirit leads can earnest men walk together, but even when they must part God may use both for his glory. He does his work through fallible men (James v. 17). In due time in this journey God gives Paul the clearest guidance.

The first episode in Paul's second journey is the call of Timothy. He was of mixed parentage, his mother being a Jewess, his father a heathen. Plainly Timothy became a Christian in Paul's first tour through those parts, three or four years previous. He was Paul's "own son in the faith" (I Tim. i 2) and was a witness of his work and suffering on that earlier journey (II Tim. iii. 11). In those few years Timothy had made a reputation not only in Lystra, but in Iconium (xvi. 2). He had become known in both churches, and was "well reported of." It was this good report that attracted Paul. His commendation by the "brethren" made it safe to choose him for a companion in more extensive work.

It is significant that in this, the only detailed call to the ministry in the book, not a word is said about the candidate's talents, not a word about his knowledge of the Scriptures. The only point emphasized is that Timothy had the approval of those who knew him. And it was to this man that Paul afterwards wrote to follow this same course for the ministry—"lay hands suddenly on no man" (I Tim. v. 22). There was, however, one hindrance in Timothy's way. The Jews were not yet prepared everywhere to receive an uncircumcised leader. There was no objecting to Timothy as a member of the body, but to take him into the office of teacher might arouse prejudice, and so Paul, in deference to that prejudice, circumcised the young

disciple. What was not necessary, even hurtful as a ground of salvation, was demanded as a qualification for public service. As the Samaritans proved to be a sort of halfway house between the Jewish and Gentile believers, so Timothy, half Jew and half heathen, unlatched the door that was by and by swung wide open for the entrance of pure Gentile converts into the ministry. And the ceremonial sin of his mother in marrying a heathen was overruled by God to his glory. The choice of Timothy indicated also that as the Lord accepted the heathen he would raise up among them the men to expound to them the truth.

What it must have cost Eunice to give up such a son as Timothy, is not noticed. The gospel everywhere is one of fact rather than sentiment. The missionary company go now from church to church delivering copies of the decree lately secured in Jerusalem. If the trouble which had arisen in the Syrian Antioch had not yet spread to these northwest churches, the decree would prevent its ever doing so. And here the proper place is found to record the happy effects of the conclusion reached in Jerusalem. When the knowledge is disseminated that the gospel is not bound by Jewish fetters, the writer tells us that the churches were established in the faith, and believers were daily added (v. 5). The body, without the missionary's presence, increased itself in love.

We follow the apostle and his company now

with great rapidity through many countries (vs. 6-8) until we stand on the narrow stretch of water separating the East from the West. The record, in its haste, does not inform us that the Galatians were evangelized at this time. Europe is the goal. That God led thither appears in that we are twice told (vs. 6, 7) that the Holy Spirit forbade further work in the Orient. Paul had set out at his own devoted instance to do a work which is now completed. He has visited the churches, but is now at sea, without chart or compass. But the Spirit that only hindered in Asia, now clearly beckoned to Macedonia. No mistake was made in interpreting the vision, for they who for weeks had been going hither and thither without guidance, now come with a "straight course" in the short space of two days to the western continent (v. 11).

The pen that has fled with speed over wide extended districts, leaving but few lines behind, now drops into the slowest pace. For we have reached the place where the advance begins over all that was gained before. Summaries are abandoned and details become numerous.

The gospel had a very humble, a very unostentatious beginning in Europe, but since it is the beginning Luke makes a full record. There was no voice as of a rushing mighty wind, no tongue of flame, heralding that which in a very few centuries transformed the Greek and the Roman. There was a woman's prayer meeting Saturday morning

on the banks of the Gangas at Philippi, and thither the missionary company wended their way and sat down. Judaism was so feeble in this city that there was no synagogue to furnish it shelter, and no men to pay it the homage of their support. Women are the last to fail in devotion to God and among these women the regeneration of a continent took its start (v. 13).

There is one word in the description of Philippi that is instructive. We are told that it was a "colony"—a colony not in the modern sense of the word; it is descriptive of the form of government. Philippi was Rome reproduced, a little Rome, with officers, laws, privileges, and spirit similar to those of the capital itself. It was a model of the mother government. So far then the gospel comes in contact here with the world's center. Its entrance into Philippi, its conflict, and its fortunes are indicative of what it must meet in its highest reach. Its victory here is a pledge of its final triumph. If the lake gives back the sunlight, the ocean will do no less. Luke intended, when he informed us that Philippi was a colony, that his account should prefigure the work in Rome.

Lydia was the first fruits of Macedonia. On this account we learn her name, her business, the place of her birth and her religious condition. She was a proselyte. Had she been a Jewess, the phrase, she "worshiped God," would not have been used. But the next item (v. 14) added in the

story cannot be accounted for in a word—the Lord "opened" Lydia's heart in order that she might attend to the things, believe the things spoken by Paul. The seed was made fruitful by the direct action of the divine grace upon the soil where it was scattered. Without this grace it would have been a wayside effort. It was a sincere and reverent woman, engaged in the solemn devotions of a prayer meeting, whose heart must be opened to make the preaching of the Word effective. Must it not be said then of all who have thus far become believers, that they have had the same direct, gracious assistance from God's Spirit? And why were we not informed until now of this fact? The seal of obstinacy and sin on thousands of hearts has been broken by the power of God that his Word might enter in, but Luke has not mentioned any case until the present one. Lydia is the first convert of Europe. She is, so to speak, a pattern of all that are to follow. Paul will be used in making converts, but he will not make them. His preaching will be necessary, it will be convincing, but those who are turned to God will find that their faith does not stand on the persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in the power of God. They will be begotten of God. It is here we learn that a phrase soon afterward used by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians, has deepest significance. He addresses the Thessalonians as the church which is "in God." And we see now that converts do not

become such by adopting a new faith, but by experiencing a new creation. God saves men. The artist arranges his plate and adjusts it to the object to be pictured. But, until he can have the sun's rays, he can have no picture, and when he gains one it is rightly called a photograph. The light made it, not he. Paul can adjust the gospel to the hearer, and bring his heart before the truth. The truth is printed on that heart, because God acts upon it, and in a vastly higher sense the believer is a photograph, the light lines being graven on the inner man by the Spirit. And thus Luke gives us a conception of the Christian which he had not presented before. From the beginning of the book there are three stages in this matter. At first we read, they who receive the Word, or, they believed. The next stage was, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, or, God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people. Here it is, God opened the heart that Lydia might believe. There is no contradiction in the book on this point, but there is development. In noting the work of the risen Lord it was first observed that men believed. It was not long until it was seen that this belief was confined to certain individuals. And now it is learned that when those individuals believe, God's Spirit is acting upon their heart.

Since the beginning of a new stage finds record here we have some repetitions of features seen be-

fore. Years have passed away, the gospel has spread far and wide, but baptism has not been mentioned since the story looked at Peter in the household of Cornelius. When the Gentile work began it was necessary to show that baptism would attend it, but after that mention there is no other until we come to the household of Lydia and of the jailer. For here again we are at the center of a new circle. Again, at Pentecost the new converts exhibited an unparalleled hospitality. They had all things common and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. When Levi the publican was chosen to follow Christ (Luke v. 27-29), he showed his joy in making the Saviour a feast. When Peter opened the door of the kingdom to Cornelius we read that the apostle did eat with him, after which there is no special note about entertainment, until Lydia in her new-found life urged the Lord's messengers to make her dwelling their home. Where they had stopped in Philippi up to this time we do not know. The gospel now provided a shelter for them. That they seem to have hesitated in accepting Lydia's offer serves only to bring her sincerity into clearer light. She constrained them.

Samaria triumphed over Simon Magus. Paphos left Elymas groping in blindness. The strong man armed is again encountered, only to suffer the spoil of another of his chattels. The meeting of an evil spirit on the entrance of the gospel to Eu-

rope, is in harmony with the cases above cited, is in harmony with the hindrances of the divine grace toward men from the dawn of their history. Satan blocks the way as soon as it is entered. The fact of a distinct possession in the case before us cannot be explained away, except in the prejudgment of the impossibility of satanic activity in human affairs. This female slave had a power that was peculiarly profitable to her owners. They recognized that ability. When Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her, these same owners saw that their slave's power was gone. They had no hope of further gain, for she had no further supernatural power. Says Alford: "All attempts to explain away such a narrative as this by the subterfuges of rationalism, as, for example, in Meyer and even Lewin, i. 243, and apparently Hackett, p. 262, is more than ever futile." *Com. in loc.* The woman was said to have a spirit of divination. It was the spirit of the Pythian Apollo, the heathen god of this name. By this term Luke gives us to know that Satan was encountered here, not as he manifested himself in Judea in Jesus' day, but as he wrought in heathendom. These possessions, so often noted in the sacred record, belonged, perhaps, exclusively to that day. They may have passed away, but he who caused them has not. Certain ancient sins have ceased, but sin has not. Satan is full of "devices" (II Cor. ii, 11). He has not abdicated his throne. His method may vary, it was

one thing then, it is another now, but he is ever the same, the enemy of all truth. As the missionaries went to the place for prayer (v. 16) from day to day, the possessed girl assailed them. At length Paul, deeply grieved at this depraved exhibition of power, cast the spirit out. Her masters, for she had been too valuable to be owned by one man, and was the property of a company, saw that their business was ruined. It was not difficult for them to raise a riot. The cruel Roman scourge, unmercifully applied to the backs of Paul and Silas, followed, and they are cast into prison. But the gospel still triumphs. They who had subdued the spirit of Python were not subdued in spirit themselves. With smarting, bleeding backs, with their feet fast in the stocks, with the dungeon darkness of the inner prison to stifle them, and with no promise of any release on the morrow, their voices rung out in tuneful worship of God. When the Jewish authorities arrested Peter and John, the place was shaken in answer to the apostles' prayers. A much more terrible shaking followed here. The earthquake was not a mere coincidence. There was more here. Earthquakes do not throw all bolted doors open, and unclasp fetters and chains. God was here. He was breaking a way for his gospel to the heart of heathendom. But his mercy followed close in the heavy steps of his power. The jailer, like a true Roman, was about to execute himself for the loss of his prisoners, as he

supposed. Paul arrests his attempt. The marvelous story of his conversion follows.

Pentecost had mostly to deal with devout men. Cornelius was grand in his uprightness. Lydia was a worshiper of God. No convert from criminality has been mentioned thus far. But here is a man who last night was glad to see Paul and Silas brutally beaten, a man who wantonly made their feet fast in the stocks, but who now before daylight is tenderly washing their wounds, is feeding and comforting them, and who with all his house is rejoicing in the Lord he just now despised. Peter's speech in the house of Cornelius—"He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him"—that speech will not fit in this case. The jailer had not feared God. The gospel is going on to greater triumphs. It has a power to win "both bad and good" (Matt. xxii. 10). But there remains another victory for the apostles. Satan is vanquished. The solid earth moved to do its part. God has converted a household. But what if the government shall still oppose? Paul and Silas, it must be assumed, returned to the prison after the baptism of the jailer's household, and the hospitable supper which followed. In the morning the jailer receives from the two prætors, who ruled the city, the curt command: "Let those men go." (v. 35.) This was sufficiently vague where the jail was full of prisoners. Why should the magistrates suppose their message would be under-

stood? And how comes it that it was understood? Of course the jailer had heard a voice in the rumble of the earthquake that spoke only of Paul and Silas. But the civil authorities it seems heard that same voice. Paul and Silas roused all their fears, and they could think of no one else. Their command was after all not curt. It was the short gasp of terror, the conviction that these men were divine messengers. It is sometimes asked why did not Paul, before he was beaten, at least before this morning hour, announce that he was a Roman citizen. That would have saved him all pains. The answer is easy. In God's providence it was not Rome's defensive law of its freeman that was to bring down the haughty magistrates' pride. That was God's own work. The magistrates were virtually at the feet of Paul and Silas before they knew them to be the state's sons, shielded by their civil allegiance. God had struck terror to the heart of the nation's officials, and thus gave witness to his ministers and to us that the powers that be cannot bar the truth.

But while Paul and Silas now are at liberty to go, they make a stand for their rights. Paul declares their Roman citizenship, and brings the very embarrassing charge that the laws have been outraged in the public beating inflicted. Such punishment of a Roman citizen was the greatest misdemeanor. By their hasty action the magistrates had involved themselves in a humiliating predica-

ment. We have seen why Paul did not make his free-born privilege known before. Why does he make such point of it now? He is offered his discharge from custody, but refuses to accept it.

It explains nothing to say that Paul had the welfare of the church in mind. If he goes away without an acknowledgment of wrong from the officers, and without an official acquittal, the church which is left behind might suffer the taunt that its founders, Paul and Silas, broke jail and became fugitives from justice. But Luke gives no hint of any such reason for Paul's stand. And if the apostle wished to provide a shield for the newly founded church, was not the humbling and angering of the rulers the very worst way to do it? Paul was already vindicated. He already had his release at the hands of the city authorities. If they should ever raise the slander that he had run away from the punishment due him, that slander could be easily met. The lictors knew better. The jailer knew better. All Paul's fellow prisoners knew better. And how would Paul's present insistance for his honor provide any additional reputation? The explanation must be discovered by a broader view. This is the first time that Paul has demanded that which the law allowed him as a preacher of the gospel. It is not the last time. Jesus made a similar claim more than once (Jno. x. 34, xviii. 23). And here we find the key to the incident before us. The state is God's creation,

intended for the good of all his creatures. In a sense it is sacred, so that he that resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God. And if one does not claim what the ordinance makes his, is he not despising the gift of God? There is a meekness which is sublime and there are daily opportunities for its exhibition, and Jesus' life and that of his illustrious servant are rich in illustrations of it. But there is a mistaken meekness, which in failing to accept the rights given by God, dishonors them. Paul was not guilty of this. He must not yield the protection of his body. That protection was God's gift as much as the salvation of the soul which Paul certainly would claim, come what might. When he was chosen from his mother's womb to be an apostle to the Roman empire, could God have been unmindful that he was a free-born Roman citizen? It is a breach of piety not to conserve the good that comes to one by nature and the state. And so we find Paul hereafter appealing to Cæsar again and again, only once in form, but more than once in fact.

The apostles, when honorably led out of jail, bring no charge for false imprisonment. They are preachers, not prosecutors. It is sufficient for them that they are now under the shield of the law; they do not seek to enforce its penalties. They at once set about their appropriate work, call the brethren together, and exhort them, and then peacefully go away.

On the journey one hundred miles on the great Roman highway from Philippi west, they do not stop at Amphipolis and Apollonia, but hasten on to Thessalonica. For Amphipolis can be evangelized from the city which they have just left, and Apollonia from the one which they now enter. Paul does not change his method in Thessalonica. For three Sabbaths in the synagogue he expounds the Scriptures. The propositions proved were three: first, the Scriptures show that the Messiah must be a sufferer; secondly, the Messiah must rise from the dead; and, thirdly, the historic Jesus did suffer and rise from the dead, and, therefore, he is the predicted Messiah. The result was that some Jews believed and many sober-minded Greeks. But the unbelieving Jew is the same in this city as in every other. His malice here is set over against that of the heathen in Philippi, and appears vastly blacker. It has been so from the beginning. The pagan Pilate was determined to let Jesus go (iii. 13) but the Jews clamored for his blood and secured it. This is repeated between these two towns. At Philippi there was a "shameful" heathen outburst. But the mistake was quickly acknowledged and righted, and Paul left the town in peace and honor. But here in Thessalonica the apostles must fly for their lives before the shafts of satanic hate. Paul, in writing of the Jews as a whole, avows the utmost regard for them (Rom. ix. 1-5, x. 1, 2). But in his first letter to the Thessa-

lonians (ii. 14-16), with its particular synagogue in mind, he has no word of love for Israel. He is almost bitter. With a few strokes Luke paints the Thessalonian Jews according to their demerit. First, they gather the rabble, or the "rascals," according to T. S. Green's translation, and set a riot on foot. Failing of their prey in Jason's house, they drag the apostles' kind host and some others before the rulers. They charge them with having set the world in revolt. And imitating the murderers of Jesus, they tacitly profess an allegiance for Cæsar, and accuse the missionaries of treason against that same potentate. They are acute enough to turn Paul's preaching of the spiritual sovereignty of Jesus into a specious lie, and so poison the mind of the populace. Their real grievance against the apostles was envy. Their alleged grievances were the invention of that envy. And so they trouble the rulers and the city with their falsehoods. But Paul and Silas are not to be found, and only Jason suffers. The Jews here could not show so dark a work for their effort as the heathen did at Philippi, but they make up for it with the exhibition of a much blacker heart. Before such a spirit Paul and Silas cannot stand, and so by night they go forty-five miles farther west to Berea on the same Roman road.

In Berea Paul met with exceptional Jews. They are called more noble than those who had driven him away at Thessalonica. They were not disposed

to prejudge the gospel, but in candor to inquire into it. On account of this reasonable disposition, they searched the Scriptures, found Paul's preaching in harmony with them, and believed. An apostolic letter always implies some need in the church to which it is written. If the New Testament contains no epistle to the Bereans, the reason is plain. These open-hearted men, with the Bible before them, required no additional guidance.

But the history is not yet done with the Jews of Thessalonica. The incomplete picture is finished with somber pigments. They repeated in Berea the outrage perpetrated in their own city, and with the same result. Paul must seek safety again by flight. This time he puts not only a long distance but the sea between him and his enemies. They no doubt lost all trace of him. Athens was well nigh three hundred miles away. Silas and Timothy were left behind, perhaps in the exigency of the flight, but Paul sends them, by his faithful conductors, an urgent message to follow him, and now awaits their arrival in the classic city.

But the burning spirit of Paul cannot rest even while he tarries for Timothy and Silas. As he moves about the town, a lone stranger, he sees its streets, its parks, its magnificent acropolis full of idols. It was nothing to him that these were the creation of Athens' masters, and were exquisite for beauty. In centuries past this city had produced poets, warriors, philosophers and statesmen, whose names

Paul must have known, but he forgets all in his sorrow of heart over these false gods. He cannot wait in silence any longer, and begins disputation in the synagogue and in the market place. Whether he had any success or not Luke does not stop to say, for his object here is to show to what this daily contention with individuals led. Paul has already met the spirit of heathenism. He now for the first time meets its philosophy and defense. The simple story of love has come in conflict with the highest Greek learning.

It is because Luke is about to report such a contest that he describes the Athenians on their intellectual side. He says no more of their social and religious character than is necessarily implied in the intellectual. The picture is not pleasing. He sets before us philosophers of two of the schools in Athens. Their spirit is not the calm, judicial spirit of studious men. For they hastily prejudge Paul, and apply to him the flippant term of babbler, affecting wonder at what he is trying to say. The Berean Bible searchers were more philosophic than the Athenian men of learning. At last, it is arranged to give him a hearing, but not because they would know, although in artful politeness they profess that this is their desire. But Luke, with one master stroke of portraiture, gives not only their character, but their only reason for inviting Paul to speak—"They spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing,"

some different thing from that which they had listened to before. They had some positive beliefs, and were proud of them, but these beliefs had given them little thoughtfulness, and they will hear the gospel for the diversion and entertainment which it may afford.

Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, and Epicurus, the founder of the other philosophic sect, were studious men. But they had died three centuries before the gospel reached Athens. Their sober spirit had passed away, too, and nothing but their tenets survived in their light-headed followers. Paul must have been thoroughly conversant with these doctrines, for his speech bears directly against them. Zeno taught that there was a God, but that he was not independent of matter. He was its reason or spirit. Much of the language of the Stoics anticipated the modern doctrine of pantheism. Logically, Zeno's philosophy left no room for idols, and the Stoics condemned them. But at the same time they justified polytheism and regarded the gods as minor developments of their great god, the World. Matter was eternal, the soul itself was corporeal, and at death returned to its original elements. It is easy to see how men with such views would mock at the doctrine of the resurrection. As to their ethics, they held that pleasure was no good and pain was no evil. The vicissitudes of life must be met with feelingless pride. As death ended all, the Stoics were not influenced

by the fears and hopes of a future life. A judgment to come found no place in their beliefs.

The Epicureans were not pantheists, but atheists. There was no God. Yet they, too, admitted the gods into their system, but regarded them only as phantoms of the popular mind. The Epicureans were materialists. They denied that anything was created. All came by chance or fate. The soul itself was composed of the same atoms which went to make up the universe. In their philosophy, a resurrection and a future life were impossible. In morals they were opposed to the Stoics. They taught that pleasure was the only good and pain the only evil. Virtue and vice were nothing in themselves. Virtue was to be followed only because it yielded on the whole most enjoyment. Vice must be shunned on account of the present pain it insured. A judgment to come was impossible.

Both systems, had they followed their logical tendencies, would have annihilated idolatry, though neither could ever have found the true God. But it may safely be assumed that in Paul's day both schools moved with the popular current, and were practically idolaters. They had too little moral earnestness to oppose the worship of the gods, and Paul gives them the credit of being in full sympathy with it.

He begins in the most conciliating manner, a manner of which both the King James and the Revised

version rob him. He says. "I perceive that you are more reverential to the gods than others." Why should the man be made to say "too superstitious," to whom any superstition would be too much? And why should he say "somewhat superstitious," when they were wholly so? All he implied, and this agrees with what follows, was that he saw gods and their temples on every hand. He met his hearers on common ground. He explained what he meant—"As I was passing through and attentively reviewing"—here is an implied compliment —"your objects of devotion, I beheld an altar." This was very familiar, but not undignified. It is as if a man to-day should begin by saying, "As I passed up the avenue, in looking at your city, I saw a church edifice." How this peculiar altar came to be inscribed, "to an unknown God," is a matter even beyond conjecture. It surely was not dedicated to Jehovah. Doubtless no one of Paul's hearers knew how it originated. It was a testimony to something or to some one beyond the hearer's range of knowledge. And thus loosely Paul connects it with Jehovah, without even implying that it was founded in his honor. He says: "What ye worship without knowing"—and here both the King James and the Revised versions are unhappy again—"what ye worship" by the erection of the altar this declare I unto you.

The speech which follows this introductory matter is so replete with ideas, so compacted, that

analysis can hardly compass them. In general it gives (I) God's relation to all things (vs. 24-28): (a) to the material universe (v. 24), (b) to men (vs. 25-28); (II) His nature (v. 29); (III) His moral government of men (vs. 30, 31).

In discussing God's relation to all things he does not stop for one moment to prove his existence. The Bible nowhere does. For atheism is not as fixed and mischievous as that infidelity which denies God's operations in things and his true nature. Human nature revolts intellectually and religiously against atheism. It feeds on infidelity. Paul did not shrink from assuming the existence of God before professed atheists. He begins with the leading truth that God created everything. This struck both Epicureanism and Stoicism to the heart. In the trenchant words of Murphy in his comment on the first verse of Genesis: "This simple sentence denies atheism; for it assumes the being of God. It denies polytheism; for it confesses the one eternal Creator. It denies materialism; for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies pantheism; for it assumes the existence of God before all things and apart from them. It denies fatalism; for it involves the freedom of the eternal Being." Paul speaks next of that error common to men in all ages—God is not confined to any sort of religious house. Neither is he served—"worshiped" is incorrect—with men's hands. He is independent. On the other hand, his relation here is one of be-

neficence—he is a universal giver. God has not only made men, he has made them of one stock (v. 26). The oneness of the race is certain, since there is but one God. And different nations and tribes do not possess their different geographical and political limitation by virtue of different national gods. National bounds are fixed, and their existence determined by the one God, not for national glory, but for moral ends—"that they should seek the Lord" (v. 27). The doctrine of his relation to men is brought to a climax in the statement that apart from him we would not live, nay, nor even move, —indeed, apart from him we could not even exist. We are his offspring.

This naturally leads to the second point in the address. That men are God's offspring must be proved. He finds the proof in a passage taken either from Aratus of Tarsus, Paul's own fellow-citizen, or from Cleanthes' hymn to Jupiter. Both employ substantially the same language. Paul does not hesitate to use even a heathen poet's words when they are true, and in the estimation of his hearers these words would be authoritative. For their poets were to them also prophets. It will be noted now that Paul, in speaking of the divine relation, has advanced far beyond the idea of creation. To men God is virtually Father, though this word is not used. But the implied paternal relation is the basis of the next argument—the nature of God. Children are like their sire.

If we are his offspring—if we, intelligent, moral, rational beings, are not only the creation but the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divine one, the sire, is like to a dumb, dead, senseless idol, no matter how artistically molded.

After this irresistible but ennobling argument Paul speaks of the moral government of God. Every word is weighty. In the past God overlooked the ignorance about himself. But now he commands a universal repentance. Idolatry must be abandoned. Paul gives a solemn reason for repentance —the day of judgment. The proof of such a day is the resurrection of the man who is to make the awards. He calls the judge a man, that they may no more think that Paul is a setter forth of strange gods, a man, because that term fits the announcement of the resurrection.

This speech shows how Paul met the heathen, with what arguments he persuaded them. It is an expansion of the brief one recorded in xiv. 15-18.

It was unanswerable. Paul's learned audience had nothing with which to meet it but that confession of defeat, their mockery. Some, however, were more polite, but no less unbelieving, in pretending they would be glad to hear him again. Under such circumstances he left them, but not without some fruit for his labor. One of the judges believed. A woman also of some standing, as the mention of her name indicates, accepted the truth, and some others.

Paul's work is done in Athens, from whose acropolis on a clear day strong eyes might see the heights of Corinth, forty-five miles distant. To this populous, commercial city, with all its wickedness, Paul wends his way alone. He finds a family skilled in his own craft, and for this reason made his abode with them, and works at his trade. This is the first time we are given to know how Paul got a foothold on entering a town for the sake of preaching. Such details are outside of Luke's purpose in this treatise. And here the matter is mentioned only because of its bearing further on. Priscilla and Aquila have a large place in the book. Hence the little item about their life (xviii. 2). Paul finds a home with them, not because they were believers but because of their trade. Their conversion, when or where, is not mentioned. Paul gives his Sabbaths to the synagogue with the usual result—the Jews reject, the Gentiles are favorable. He leaves the synagogue with the token of abhorrence appointed by the Lord, but finds a place for service in a house hard by. It was as accessible as the synagogue, no more so, and no less. The labor in the synagogue was not without its fruits. The leader himself was won, with many others. And here again baptism is mentioned. It was noted at the beginning of this European work, and then not again until now we reach the last city evangelized on this tour.

The movements of Timothy, as here recorded,

show how closely Luke sticks to his main purpose. He has left one point entirely in the dark. He told us Paul sent for Timothy from Athens and was waiting his arrival there. And now he informs us that Timothy and Silas overtake the apostle in Corinth. The only inference could be that Paul did not tarry long enough in Athens to afford Timothy time to reach him. But this is not the state of the case. From the Epistle to the Thessalonians we learn that Timothy did come on and find Paul in Athens (I Thess. iii. 1, 2) but was hurried back to Thessalonica to help that church. The arrival mentioned here in Corinth is a second one since we parted from the young preacher at Berea. But Luke sticks so closely to the apostle's work in spreading the gospel that all else is omitted. He does not mention the fact that at this time, here in Corinth, Paul wrote the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and sent Timothy back with them, nor does he say a word about Paul's great anxiety at Corinth for this northern church.

At this time, just after Paul had to leave the synagogue, an event occurred which puts the divine seal on this whole course from Troas to Corinth. There the apostle had a vision; here he has another commanding him to remain and preach. The vision there said no more than this, Come into Macedonia. But Paul is now far beyond the limits of Macedonia. He is away off here in distant Achaia. Is this the Lord's will? The vision an-

swers—"I am with thee." But Luke has plainly another object in his record of the vision—to show how the Lord can sustain the spirit of his servant. He has already shown more than once how the bodies of the apostles were preserved. Paul was mortal. He was certainly dejected. The very first word in the vision is, "Be not afraid." Again he is assured that no man shall set on him to hurt him. How exactly the epistle to these same Corinthians, written about five years later, harmonizes with this. He says his advent among them was "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (I Cor. ii. 1-3). No wonder. He had been "shamefully entreated "at Philippi. He had been driven by persecution out of Thessalonica and Berea. He had been left alone to be mocked at Athens. He had been virtually expelled from the synagogue here in Corinth. It had been one long siege of bitter trial in which his life was more than once in peril. This was too much for even his iron nerve. His courage was tottering, and Luke shows how the Lord cheered his heart again. The last word in the vision must have been most grateful of all—"I have much people in this city." They were yet in the blindness of heathenism, but they were the Lord's and known to him, and Paul is to remain and preach that they may be cleansed of their idolatry and brought to the light.

It might be asked here: Is this the only city of all those visited by Paul that contained people for the

Lord? Why is this mentioned here? Because Luke is showing the unfolding of things, how the Lord led so that one truth after the other was brought out. Paul had been sent forth with the commission to preach. He knew his duty well. But he was in danger of losing heart, and to encourage him he is now informed why he is to preach. The Lord has a people among the sin-sodden Corinthian mass, and he will use the apostle and his message for their salvation. The Lord does not send out his servants to preach to the wind. He knows his own and commissions his servants to gather them into the fold.

As Luke is wholly concerned here with showing the Lord's care for the apostle, he does not say a word about how this gathering out of the foreknown people was accomplished.

The vision had its influence on Paul, and the Lord made its promise good, for in the first place we are immediately told (xviii. 11) that the apostle staid here a long time, a year and six months, and, again, an interesting incident is related to show God's care of his servant. Gallio, brother of Seneca, was proconsul. The Jews rise up against Paul and bring the charge that he is persuading men to worship God contrary to Roman law. But Gallio is a different man from those who ruled in Philippi,—different from those who ruled in Thessalonica. Hence his name finds a place in the account and their names do not. Paul is about to

make his defense when the governor addresses the Jews. He declares if this were a question of morals he could entertain it. But since it is, as he conceives, a mere matter of names, whether the name of Jesus is identical with the name of Christ, he will have nothing to do with it. He non-suits the Jews, and bids them depart. His conduct gives the cue to the Greeks, who, in their inveterate hatred of the Jews, fall upon and beat the ruler of the synagogue, evidently the leader of the case against Paul. Gallio does not interfere. He probably felt that Sosthenes deserved as much for coming into court with such a trivial case. The Jewish views of the gospel gave him no care.

This event did not occur at the end of Paul's stay in Corinth, but sometime during the year and six months of his ministry. For "Paul after this tarried there yet a good while." But in the spring of the year 54 A. D. he leaves Corinth for Syria. The mention of Priscilla and Aquila (there is none of Silas or Timothy) is necessary to an understanding of the history further along. But what is meant by the shaving of the head and the vow (xviii. 18) is not easily settled. Most likely it was Paul's head that was shaved and not Aquila's, though the language is somewhat ambiguous. Paul having now left Corinth and having reached the port town of Cenchrea, where he must embark, may have signalized and signified the completion of his work by removing his locks, the tokens of his vow. These

would have significance among the Jews and others in Corinth. They would be meaningless on board ship and during his whole journey home. His work for the present was done. Let its pledges disappear.

In the journey from Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila are left at Ephesus where the account soon finds them again. Paul makes an address in the Ephesian synagogue, which is so well received that he promises to return, "if God will." His stay is so brief because he wishes to be at the feast in Jerusalem. Neither the text nor the feast is wholly certain. The text is defended by Meyer, Baumgarten and others, and as to the feast it is safe to say it was Pentecost. He sailed from Ephesus. A single verse takes him to Cæsarea, to Jerusalem, and then north to the Syrian Antioch, and the second missonary tour is completed.

SECTION XV

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN IN CONTRAST WITH THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

Acts xviii. 23—xix. 7

The ministry of John the Baptist was necessarily so overshadowed by the Lord's which followed, that the power of the former is often overlooked. To minimize the baptism which John preached is to belittle that which followed. Jesus called the forerunner the greatest born of women. John stirred the nation from center to circumference. In his zeal to purify he rebuked every one, from the publican in his greed to the sensual Herod on his throne. Men mistook him in his holiness for the expected Messiah. He found it necessary to say again and again, "I am not he." He won to his side the choicest spirits in Israel, men like Andrew and Simon and John and James. These, with thousands of others, were John's ardent followers before the Son of Mary came to his baptism. And when the latter began his ministry, which in its outset, and for months afterward, did not differ from John's, the disciples of each, as a rule, followed their own leader (John iii. 22-26; iv. 1). That is, those who came to the decreasing light were slow to desert it for the increasing one. And, down to his death, this

last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets had those of his converts who clung to him (Luke vii. 19, Matt. xiv. 12). If Herod had not destroyed the earnest reformer it seems certain that there must have been two parties in Israel, the disciples of Jesus and the disciples of John.

It is not strange then that we find distinct traces of John's influence at the distance of both time and place to which the present section belongs. Alexandria and Ephesus are many hundreds of miles from the Jordan. But Apollos had learned John's baptism in the former city and came to preach it in the latter. And a full quarter of a century has passed since John's head was offered a sacrifice to the hate of Herodias. After so long a time, and after the gospel of God's grace has spread abroad, men are still found to bear aloft the banner of the Baptist.

But after all, the two streams that started full twenty-five years ago in the same territory, and that flowed some distance with the same volume now greatly differ. John's has dwindled. The other has become a mighty river that promises to engulf Rome's national religion. Our section is intended not only to show the difference between the two, but how they united here in Ephesus, and how the smaller at last wholly lost its individuality in the other. The sternest preaching of reform without the risen Christ as a basis cannot maintain itself in the world, or John's must have suc-

ceeded. How meager it looks after a quarter of a century in comparison with that other, whose head was the ascended Lord, and whose energy was the Holy Spirit.

In the early autumn of 54 A. D., if the chronologists are followed, Paul leaves Antioch in Syria, and a single verse (xviii. 23) is all that is written about his work through Galatia and Phrygia, for Luke aims now at nothing but this question of John's ministry. These inland countries were only mentioned in the preceding tour (xvi. 6), when undoubtedly they were both evangelized, or Paul on the present tour would not have found churches to strengthen. Paul's work among the Galatians was of an intensely interesting character, as is learned from the epistle subsequently written to them. That Luke says nothing of this work shows again how closely the Holy Spirit holds him to his task, not to write the history of apostolic evangelization, but of the development of the church under the guidance of the Lord. Nothing in the way of development occurred in Galatia, and so its notice in the Acts is the scantiest possible, little besides the name being given.

Luke makes us fully acquainted with Apollos. He is a native of the cultured city Alexandria. He is skilled in speech, which implies learning. He is thoroughly versed in the Old Testament books. He has been trained in the teachings, if the best text is followed, of Jesus, and knew his exposition

of the Law and his maxims for a holy life. He was full of zeal and taught these things with earnest care. But his knowledge at most did not reach further than the cross. He was not acquainted with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He knew only the baptism of John. By this, it is needless to add, is meant not merely the immersion administered by the great prophet, but the teaching and system which that immersion embodied and set forth. The preaching of Apollos was about what we may imagine Peter's or John's would have been had they left Palestine during the second year of Jesus' ministry, without hearing a word from the Saviour afterward. Only they would have lacked Apollos' culture and his knowledge of the Scriptures, but their point of view would have been the same.

Luke has drawn this portrait of the eloquent Alexandrian, with his knowledge of John's baptism, that he may make the bolder contrast between him and the humble couple whom he met in the synagogue. Jesus said, in speaking of John, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. xi. 11). The story before us illustrates it. The refugee tent-makers know more than the skilled disciple of John. They hear him in the synagogue and, readily detecting his deficiency, take him to themselves and instruct him in the way of God more perfectly. These workmen are more than a match for Apollos. He knew the Scriptures, but

they knew also the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He was skilled in religious speech, but they were full of spiritual understanding. One delicate point is obscured in the twenty-sixth verse of the King James' version by the reversal of the names of Apollos' instructors. That order ought to be Priscilla and Aquila, the woman's name first. Had the original put the husband's name first no copyist or emendator would have thought of changing it. The change, no doubt, was made to put this passage in harmony with what Paul afterward wrote in reference to a woman's right to teach. But the passage in its original form, with Priscilla's name standing first, does not conflict with Paul, and by the unwarranted alteration the very point is lost that it was a woman who instructed Apollos. This fact emphasizes the antithesis between the two systems confronting each other here. If there ever was a female among John's disciples, the Scriptures make no note of it. Jesus not only had many of the daughters of Israel in his train, but the scripture used on Pentecost's day puts them in some sense on the same level with the sons of Israel—that scripture quoted by Peter—"And on my handmaidens will I pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." It was in the exercise of this gift, experimentally unknown to John, that a woman was now guiding one of the very greatest of his disciples into the full light of the truth.

It must be thought that through the tutorage of

Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos received the Holy Spirit and by him was set in full fellowship with the risen Lord. But the account is absolutely silent on this point, for its main object is to compare the teaching of John with the teaching of the ascended Christ, and the superiority of the latter is sufficiently obvious when the best of John's followers must take lessons from the humblest of Christ's.

Of course, Apollos, after receiving such a broad beam of light, could not go back to the synagogue. To be sure he might have confessed that he had spoken hitherto without full knowledge of the truth and might have claimed that now he knew the way of the Lord perfectly. But this would have raised a suspicion against him sufficiently strong to destroy his usefulness. Aquila and Priscilla can tell him about Corinth. He can begin there with his new found truth. And so with letters of commendation (v. 27) he goes to strengthen the work which Paul had left only a few months previously. One sentence about Apollos' work in Corinth shows the advantage he had derived from his intercourse with Priscilla and Aquila—"he helped them much who had believed through grace." He had not helped the tent-makers at Ephesus, they had helped him. The reason is, Priscilla and Aquilla surpassed him in being acquainted with the grace of the Lord, and Apollos had belonged to a system that knew nothing about grace. But now that he had learned it he could instruct those who had experienced the

same favor. And here again we see how a striking fact is brought out, not because it has not existed before, but because events had not yet progressed far enough to bring it to the surface. At the outset it was said that by much persuasion men believed; then, that those who were ordained to eternal life believed; next, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia that she might believe, and now, for the first time, we are informed that these Corinthian believers, and of course all others, became such through grace. This comes about here because at this point the history took such a turn as to make the statement of the fact pertinent. The doctrine does not come as a dry formula, but as a living part of the history. The church is a plant, whose growth is followed, in which new shoots from time to time appear.

It is interesting to note how the Lord raised up in Apollos a new and mighty aid in his work. The Epistles to the Corinthians show that in some sense he was the equal of Paul. He shared with the apostle the affections of this strong Achaian church. But it is no part of Luke's purpose to exhibit the Lord's agency in leading the eloquent African into the ministry, but rather that no qualifications equip one for that ministry, except the knowledge of grace furnished by the Holy Ghost.

While Apollos is in Ephesus, Paul is coming thither from his work in the highlands (xix. 1) or "upper coasts" of Phrygia and Galatia. The chap-

ter mark which intervenes so prominently here is in a very illogical place. It would be much better had it been placed between the twenty-second and the twenty-third verses of the preceding chapter, that the account of the baptism of the twelve men might have been joined directly to the story concerning Apollos which it supplements. Luke, in relating Paul's meeting with these twelve men, is still pursuing his intent to prove how far the church has outstripped the best that John's ministry could do. The apostle, on arriving in Ephesus, shortly after the departure of Apollos, finds certain disciples. At first we might think that these were made by Apollos. But we can hardly conceive that he, after finding the light, would go away without enlightening them. But whence they came or how they came to be what they were does not concern Luke. Priscilla and Aquila quickly detected the defect in Apollos' faith. In some way Paul soon saw a similar deficiency in these twelve disciples. He inquires: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" They answer that they did not hear that he was given. Paul, with the Christian formula of baptism in mind, virtually asks how it could be that they did not know about the gift of the Holy Ghost. They say that they had been baptized into John's baptism. They stood just where Apollos did when he arrived in Ephesus. Paul now reminds them that John's baptism pledged them to believe in Jesus.

The twelve admit it, and now submit to the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. After the baptism they receive the Holy Spirit by the imposition of Paul's hands, the proof of the gift being that they speak with tongues. And this is now the last time that baptism is mentioned in the book of Acts, and so also the last notice of the laying on of hands. And this story about the twelve men clearly shows the inadequacy of that which had had its day in John's mighty career.

There are now five instances of the miraculous bestowment of the Holy Spirit, each teaching its own lesson in showing who can be admitted to the new, spiritual society: (1) Pentecost decided that those who had rejected the earthly ministry of the Christ might come in. (2) The gift to Samaria taught that those who have a religion half true and half heathen may repent and come. (3) In Cornelius the Gentiles are admitted. (4) In Saul one who had resisted the Holy Ghost and had persecuted the church received that same Holy Ghost and was admitted. (5) In the twelve men at Ephesus those who had been negligent in obeying John's teaching to believe in the Christ, and who must be reminded of it by Paul, are admitted to the spiritual body. If the list closes with this case it must be that all classes of men have now been reached in the spread of the gospel, Jews, half Jews, Gentiles, persecutors, and those who knew only the baptism of John.

Many interesting questions suggest themselves here. Was Apollos rebaptized by Aquila? Was he enabled to speak with tongues? Were these twelve men baptized by John himself twenty-five years before, or were they disciples of John's disciples? In any case why did Paul have them reimmersed? Why, as apparently in the case of the twelve apostles, should not the imparting of the Holy Spirit have completed that baptism which these twelve at Ephesus had had before Paul met them? Not one of these questions can be answered conclusively. For they all lie outside of what Luke has in mind here, and to which he rigidly confines himself. The Word of God is as clear as a sunbeam on every point on which it intends to give light. If it does not answer related and suggested questions, it must be because these in no wise affect the matter in hand. Two things are unmistakable in this section. The first is that John's ministry could not give full knowledge of the truth, as the story about Apollos shows, and the second is that that same ministry could not give the Holy Spirit, as the case of the twelve shows. If Apollos was baptized by Aquila and received the gift of tongues, Luke, by not recording the fact, has left himself room to bring out his discussion in the form of a climax, and has thus made his proof the more conclusive. The section closes with giving the number of the men. This has the same force argumentatively as the information about

Apollos' culture and eloquence given at the beginning of the section. What his knowledge did not secure for him their numbers did not gain for them. Though there were twelve of them, every one was deficient, notwithstanding their earnestness in following John's baptism.

But the story is nothing, if it is not practical. Apollos is presented to us in a character little less than grand. The twelve men are sincere, candid devout, upright. A man may have the noble, cultured zeal of an Apollos, and the pure earnestness of these twelve, and yet be appallingly below that grace which is found only in Christ Jesus. John was the greatest that ever lived to preach a pure theistic morality. But Luke surely means to show that to live in the power of the Holy Spirit is vastly superior, because it has the power to set an obscure Aquila far above an eloquent Apollos.

SECTION XVI

THE BIRTH OF THE PURPOSE TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD

Acts xix. 8—xxi. 16

It might have been said before the present section in the book of Acts was reached, that the church has attained its complete character, so that it is now a body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, and animated and united by the Holy Spirit. Henceforth and to the end Luke is concerned to show how the church found its center from which to enlighten the world and color all succeeding centuries. That center is not Jerusalem which rejects, but Rome which receives Christ's apostle. The story gathers more closely about him. In what is immediately before us we see how he was led into the purpose to make the political world's center his own. Little is said about his three years' evangelization at Ephesus. The first really new thing in the record is Paul's endowment with extraordinary power, and how that power became the occasion of his wide-reaching intent to see Rome. But this power showed itself not only in him, but on all about him. Diana's worship was tottering, and her votaries were rushing to her defense. Paul commits the work in these

regions to other hands, and sets out for Jerusalem. The time had come for this. It is just at the time when this section closes that he writes to the Romans:—"Having no more place in these parts. . . I will come to you" (Rom. xv. 23). This is the keynote of the present stage of the history which shows how the purpose was formed, and how Paul set out to realize it.

Milligan, in his Baird Lectures on the Apocalypse, shows the similarity between the Gospels and the Book of Revelation. The latter is modeled on certain prophetic portions of the former. If it were profitable there could be traced here a duplication between the book of Acts and the life of Jesus. And why not? God's dealings with successive generations of men have ever been from the same center, but in ever-widening circles. The likeness in the several administrations of the divine grace for the overcoming of sin's obstinate disease is not hard to see. After John was imprisoned Jesus' power, no matter for what reason, bloomed forth, in the active Galilean ministry (Mark i. 14) from which he went up to Jerusalem to be rejected, and thus open the way for the gospel to reach the world. It is after John's baptism is absorbed in the progress of the church, that Paul receives uncommon power to finish this provincial work, after which he goes to Jerusalem, is rejected and the gospel reaches its goal in the world's capital. Were it of any service this parallel might be traced in

many details. Nor is it worth while to ask whether it was designed. It exists between the two records because the aims of Jesus and of Paul were the same.

In reference to the evangelization which had now its center in Ephesus, it is to be noted that it extended over a period of about three years (xx. 31), three months in the synagogue and two years and some months in the school-room of Tyrannus. In the last tour the Spirit had not suffered Paul to preach in this district (xvi. 6) but had hurried him on past it into Europe. The divine guidance directed both as to the time and the place for evangelical work. And for Ephesus the time had now come. But though Paul staid here so long, very little is said about his work. There was the usual opposition of the Jews, the separation from them, and then in a single sentence we learn that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (xix. 10). There must have been many assistants and a thoroughly organized effort. After this very brief account the history comes at once to the main thought of this section. God endowed his servant with great power, so that no ordinary miracles were wrought by him (v. 12). The handkerchiefs and aprons carried from Paul's person cured diseases and expelled demons. This extraordinary power incited some traveling exorcists to use the name of Jesus in their incantations over a demoniac. The possessed man rose against

them, drove them from the house and a scene ensued on the streets, and before the eyes of so many, that all Ephesus came to know it. The result was threefold. First, a solemn dread spread over the city. The excitable Greek populace had been brought face to face with the supernatural from both worlds. The city became convinced that the name of Jesus must not be lightly used or trifled with, and so they magnified it (v. 17). He had himself signally vindicated the honor of his name in the public discomfiture of the Jews who had attempted profanely to conjure with it. A second result was that many who had changed their creed but not their morals now mended their ways, and publicly confessed their evil deeds. To all appearances these were members of the church before the demoniac's onslaught upon the exorcists (v. 18). The third result was more directly in line with what had made such a general stir. The exorcists would be classed with the magicians. The latter now saw the difference between the power of Jesus and their own futile arts. Without money and without price, Jesus' name really healed. For great sums they did no more than to delude their victims. In the fear that prevailed they have not the courage to pursue their magic arts further. It might befall them as it did the exorcists. They bring together the parchments on which their occult but deceptive formulæ are written and make a public bonfire of them. While the intrinsic price

of these books was very little their market price amounted to an enormous sum (v. 19). The black art was overthrown in the city. Those who had practiced it compelled themselves to seek an honest livelihood. Luke sums up these results with the exultant statement: "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." That Word had won converts in many places, but now a whole city was subdued before it, and it could at last be said that it had "prevailed" (v. 20).

The very next verse might be anticipated. The gospel having succeeded in Ephesus and in all Asia Paul is at leisure to go elsewhere. But the comprehensiveness of his purpose at this time is at first sight startling. It sweeps the world's centers. He will visit the former fields of his labors, Macedonia and Achaia, he will go to Jerusalem, and then he will visit the imperial city. The magnitude of this resolution is the outcome of the great triumph of the gospel in Asia. It is said indeed that he purposed all this "in the spirit," but this phrase should probably read as in most modern translations. Paul purposed in his spirit, or simply he purposed. In this outlook toward the future he was guided, as it must surely be thought, by the Holy Spirit. But Luke does not mention that here. His aim is now to show how God's guidance of events brought the great missionary to the world's capital. With what object Timothy and Erastus are sent on ahead, we are not in-

formed. The fact is mentioned only to show that Paul moved at once to carry out his absorbing intent, though he must tarry himself yet a while in Asia (v. 22).

The historian meanwhile will add another event to his record to exhibit the power of the gospel. Already he has shown its influence on those who had come, in a greater or less degree, to think as Paul thought. He will now set forth its influence on the opposite party. Or rather he will point out how the gospel has undermined the leading sin of the city. Idolatry is trembling, and seems to its interested adherents to be tottering to its fall. There is no small stir about the gospel with the new life which it has induced, "the way" as it is now called. Demetrius makes an artful speech. He was plainly a leading, an influential citizen. His business was the life of other kindred trades. All these felt the stagnation which faith in Jesus brought about. It was as Demetrius said: "This Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people," not only in Ephesus, but "throughout all Asia." The market for silver models of the great heathen temple, one of the most noted in the world, was flat. The noise of the workmen's hammers in the shops of Demetrius was steadily decreasing while the songs of praise to God were heard on every hand. The temple steps, once crowded with devotees, were less and less trodden, there were only stragglers where once crowds had

pressed forward, and so something must be done. Demetrius calls a meeting. He appeals to his hearers' covetousness, but adroitly covers the selfishness of that by a higher appeal to their love of their renowned goddess. It is not without reason that he warns of the danger that not only the goddess will come to be despised, but also that her worship will cease. Demetrius had not mistaken about the way the tide had set, and he felt the force of the current. An uproar followed. Luke's account of it is every way graphic. Some incidents are specially instructive. Paul, anxious about his two friends who were caught in the wild rush to the theater, was determined to go in to the people. Had the disciples permitted him, in all probability he would never have seen Rome. But now the fact comes to the surface that even some of the Asiarchs, or "chiefs of Asia," are his friends. This friendship may have been generous. But it does not detract from Luke's object to show the influence of the gospel in Asia, if it is assumed that these Asiarchs were not unselfish in their regard for Paul. They were ten in number. It was their duty to provide at their own expense for the public games, and to keep order during their celebration. In so far as Paul makes these heathen games undesirable and diminishes the number attending them, in so far he saves these Asiarchs both expense and trouble. The very reason that would make Demetrius an enemy of Paul would make these rulers of the games Paul's friends.

Alexander is mentioned only to show how his appearance as an apologist excited the crowd to their mad two hours' cry, by which the town clerk was brought to the theater. Hence it cannot be told to which party Alexander belonged, whether he was a Christian or an unbeliever, whether he was thrust forward by the Jews as one of their own to defend them, or as an apostate to Jesus, and hence a fit victim for the wrath of the mob. In either case he was a hated Jew, and this is all that the historian's argument requires here. As usual he does not stop to answer irrelevant questions.

A public official, called the town clerk, gets a hearing. His speech is a "pattern of candid argument and judicious tact." It is wholly on the side of Paul. The first point he makes is that the crowd are shouting themselves hoarse in proof of what every one admits. Here was a skillful blending of flattery and reproof. His next point is that the Christian leaders have done no criminal act. They have not robbed the temples ("churches" is a violent mis translation) of the gods, neither have they spoken ill of Diana. If there has been any wrong-doing it was personal, it concerned Demetrius alone, and should be settled in the Ephesian courts then in session. This puts the silversmith in an awkward position before the crowd. Why does he appeal to them in a law case? But the town clerk shows more deference to the mob. If they are inquiring about other matters—he would

half way convey his assumed conviction that they have some grievance—why, it must be determined in the lawful assembly. The article, omitted in the King James' version, and the adjective, suggest what the two words do not say about this assembly. Let the hearers reflect one moment on this suggestion. They are not a legally called town meeting, but a mob on the eve of riot. This prepares the way for the third and effective point in the speech—"We are in danger." Rome had granted Ephesus no little freedom, but the imperial city was jealous of all turbulent assemblages, and this uproar might cost Ephesus a serious abridgment of its municipal rights. The town clerk could easily see that his address had not been in vain, and so he pronounces the formal words which dissolve the crowd, and they go quietly to their homes. Demetrius has gained nothing but chagrin and a conviction that the gospel has a foothold in Ephesus from which it cannot be so readily moved. The Asiarchs are in favor of it, the town clerk will say nothing against it, and Rome so far defends it.

Having now written about how the high resolve was formed to see Rome, and having given proofs of the completeness of the apostle's work in Ephesus, Luke shows how the apostle set out on his journey. Rome is his goal, but before he can turn his face thither he must see the churches he has founded and commit their care to other hands.

The journey of many months through Macedonia and Achaia is condensed into three verses (xx. 1-3). The writer seems almost impatient to get his subject turned, if not toward Rome, at least toward the Jewish capital. Those months spent in Macedonia and Achaia were full of work. The Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Romans, the latter written at this time from Corinth, show how very much the busy, tireless apostle did. It was in these months that he evangelized Illyricum away to the northwest (Rom. xv. 19). It was on this hastily described tour that he was collecting money everywhere for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Luke could not have been unacquainted with these things. He himself, we must suppose, helped to carry the churches' contributions to their destination. He knew all that Paul had done from Ephesus to Corinth, and back again, but according to his manner of writing and the structure of his book, he will not turn from his subject. He is silent about all these things. He does not give the name of a single town visited on this long trip. He bunches all together in one word Greece, nowhere else employed in the New Testament. He is concerned now with following Paul toward the holy city. One thing he notes about Paul's presence in Greece. He was intending to sail to Syria and thus, of course, to save months of time in reaching his supreme limit. But the malignant Jews were ready to attack his vessel (xx. 3) and to shun them

the apostle must take the long and tedious land route. This one little incident is like the simple theme in an elaborate dirge. It is the first note of that long delay which Paul was to experience in getting to Rome, a delay caused by the rancor of Israel against the gospel.

After this lightning sketch the style suddenly changes. The moment that Paul turns south from Philippi (xx. 6) Luke writes with the utmost detail. The days and nights are given all the way from the chief city in Macedonia to the chief city of the Jews. It is not difficult to see how Paul and his company were engaged at almost every step. From the close of the Passover week in Philippi to the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem we know where Paul is and what he is doing. What is the meaning of this abundance of particulars? Shall we say it merely signifies that at Philippi Luke joined the apostle's company, as the resumption of the autoptic style makes certain, and being now an eyewitness, he could give a full and detailed narrative? This would be to confound means and aim. Luke's presence on this journey was the means by which he gathered all these items, but why did he write them? Shall we say that he whose object in every word set down hitherto was as clear as a sunbeam, becomes now suddenly purposeless in his narrative, and is nothing more than a news reporter? It will aid us in discovering what the history means here if we note the threads on which the multitudinous

facts are hung. First of all, Paul is taking leave of the churches. He does not expect to see them again. The address to the Ephesian elders is given as a sample of these farewell visits. Again, this is the place to show the completeness and especially the unity of the churches. They all possess the same spirit. That spirit is one of solicitude for the gospel. Paul is everywhere warned about the danger that awaits him at Jerusalem. Again, in the section now before us, we find for the first time warm exhibitions of love for Paul. Luke hitherto had only shown how the great missionary was hated. He had not told of the devotion of the Galatians, who would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle (Gal. iv. 14, 15), nor of the esteem of the Thessalonians (I Thess. iii. 6) and of the Philippians (Phil. i. 26).

Now it is plain that the history, by lingering along from day to day and depicting what is pleasant, means to prepare us for the painful events soon to occur in Jerusalem. The churches are everywhere with Paul, but to carry out his grand design he leaves them for that caldron of rage where the Lord was rejected and where he too must be.

It will not be forgotten that Luke's story here is not unlike his former treatise about the Lord. In the gospel, even before the ninth chapter is completed (Luke ix. 51), the account of the Saviour's last journey to Jerusalem already begins. To cite the end thus early enhances its signifi-

cance. And so here. The delay among the multitudinous particulars throws light on that to which they lead.

Paul's journey to Jerusalem begins with a list of the names of his traveling companions (xx. 4). The words "into Asia," are not genuine, and the Revised version is every way preferable here. These preceded Paul and the rest of the company to Troas. Here there was a stop of seven days, that the first day of the week might come around and bring all the disciples together. That they met at night signifies that they observed the evening of the first day and that the time of these disciples was not their own. Many of them may have been slaves who had to toil during the day. But they had nothing to conceal, and this was not a secret meeting, for there were many lights in the upper room (xx. 8) where the church came together. Apparently they met on our Saturday evening, so that the communion loaf was broken before daylight on our Sunday morning. The story of Eutychus comes in appropriately here. That extraordinary power which induced Paul to enter on his present course has not deserted him. He has now fairly set out for Jerusalem, and it is at this supreme moment that the apostle works his greatest miracle. Eutychus is restored to life. No wonder that when in the morning they led the young man alive they were "not a little comforted." For how could Paul have gone away from Troas in

peace of mind, if as a result of the meeting a mangled corpse must be left behind. As it is, he can now go forward assured that God is with him. Luke notes the daily stages until Miletus is reached. Ephesus is passed by in the earnestness to get on to Jerusalem. But from Miletus the Ephesian elders are summoned, and Paul addresses them in a farewell speech. Its object is to impress them with the responsibility which is henceforth upon them and to teach them how to meet it. To this end his three years' work among them is full of instruction. The address may be analyzed as follows:—

I. Paul reviews his three years' ministry, vs. 18-21.

1. The spirit of his ministry: (a) he was lowly minded; (b) he was tender, working often in tears; (c) he was patient under the plots of the Jews against him (vs. 18, 19).

2. The diligence of his ministry: (a) he made every salutary thing known to them; (b) he taught both in public and in private (v. 20); (c) he neglected no class, whether Jew or Greek (v. 21 a).

3. The theme of his ministry—repentance and faith (v. 21 b).

II. The present state of things, vs. 22-27.

1. Paul's immediate purpose—to go to Jerusalem (v. 22).

2. The shadows lying across his path—bonds and afflictions (v. 23).

3. Paul's fixed purpose—to complete his ministry (v. 24).

4. A sorrowful prediction—the elders shall see Paul no more (v. 25).

5. Paul leaves no debt of obligation behind; (a) he is pure from the blood of all (v. 26) (b) because he declared among the Ephesians the whole body of truth (v. 27).

III. The elders' responsibility, vs. 28-35.

1. Motives to duty: (a) the elders received their office from the Holy Spirit; (b) the flock for which they must care was the purchase of most precious blood (v. 28).

2. The perils ahead: (a) wolves would come in (v. 29); (b) some of themselves would prove false (v. 30).

3. A reminder—how for three years Paul watched night and day with tears (v. 31).

4. He commends them to God and to his Word (v. 32).

5. The elders must be unselfish in their service, as (a) Paul's labor with his own hands taught (v. 33, 34), and (b) as Jesus' own words enjoin (v. 35).

But no analysis can do justice to the sweet, pathetic, personal persuasion of this address. Why does he tell the elders of the sorrows which are ahead of him, why inform them that they are looking upon his face for the last time, except to move them by worthy regard for him to conserve his

work? Analysis can no more compass the argument of this speech than the analysis of a wild flower can preserve its odor.

It has often been noted, especially by Alford, that those who are called elders in the seventeenth verse are addressed as bishops in the twenty-eighth verse. While the titles are two, the office is but one. But the faulty rendering of the King James' version which places these bishops "over" the flock has not received due attention. The Revised version is correct here, though it fails in a similar passage in I Thess. v. 12. Paul knew of no one who was over the church except the Lord Jesus.

In the twenty-eighth verse the phrase "church of God" must be regarded as genuine. It is a combination of frequent occurrence, found elsewhere in Paul's writings not less than eleven times. Why should he in this single place where most of all his argument required the word God, why should he have used here the weaker word Lord? But having written the word God it is easy to conceive how some later hand in the interests of Arianism should change it to Lord. The Pauline usage is a strong argument in favor of the former.

At the conclusion of the address a scene ensued so beautifully tender (vs. 36-38) that the less said about it the better. If Paul had the bitter hate of the Jews he had the burning love of the disciples of Jesus.

After leaving Miletus, the historian hurries the

apostolic company along to Tyre in Phœnicia. Little notes of the journey are given (xxi. 1-4.) At Tyre there is a stay of seven days. The King James phrase "and finding disciples," leads astray. It suggests that believers were accidentally encountered. The truth is, it was expected that disciples would be here. It ought to read, "and when we had found out the disciples." Believers in Jesus existed everywhere. All Paul had to do was to look for them. And here in Tyre there is the same solicitous regard for him. From Philippi to Jerusalem the churches are alike, and all possess the same spirit. But here a difficulty confronts us. These Tyrean brethren said to Paul "through the Spirit" that he should not go up to Jerusalem. And yet it is under the guidance of this same Spirit that he is on the way thither. Is the divine counsel divided? This church had prophets among its numbers, for it was only by means of these that Paul was warned against pursuing his course further. The difficulty is greatly increased here, for those who believe that the church was in some sense inspired. Such must feel that Paul, despite his noble purpose to go to Jerusalem, was disobeying the voice of God. And some do not hesitate to say so. But the story contains no hint of such insubordination, while at the same time it must be allowed that the prophets of the church were under the influence of the Spirit. For how else could they know what awaited Paul in Jerusalem,

which city may not have known at this time that the great apostle was coming? But these church prophets were not so inspired that their voice was equivalent to the voice of God. They were not inspired as an apostle was, not inspired as Paul was, who lays down explicit directions for the prophets' guidance (I Cor. xiv 29-33). The voice of the New Testament prophet was always worthy of attention and respect, but it was not always authoritative nor even correct. The rule by which it was to be tried is found in I Thess. v. 20, 21—"Despise not prophesyings, prove all things, hold fast to that which is good," which is just what Paul would be most likely to do in this case. He would say to these brethren that there was no doubt that bonds and afflictions awaited him, for he had heard that prediction again and again in this journey (xx. 23). But, he would note, when it was said that he must not go to Jerusalem, how tender solicitude was mistaken for the utterance of God's Spirit, for he himself was so unmistakably directed that he was moving forward "bound in the Spirit" (xx. 22). Surely the man who was going in the teeth of the divine will could not receive such comfort as Paul was given in Jerusalem (xxiii. 11). When Jonah did not take the course prescribed by God he was not commended—disaster overtook him.

When the seven days are completed at Tyre the apostolic company set out on the journey south-

ward. The whole church accompanies them beyond the city, and for some distance down the beach. They separate with prayer. The children (xxi. 5) who took part in this farewell scene could never forget it. It would not be strange if away in the next century they told their own children how in the spring of the year—we now call it 58 A. D.—they had knelt on the shore with Christ's great apostle while he commended them to God. They could tell of his distinguished appearance and his noble spirit. The beginning of the second century must have had thousands of men in all countries who in their youth had seen and heard God's messenger to the Gentiles.

At Ptolemais the stay is brief. The brethren are saluted, after which Paul and his company come by land to Cæsarea and stop with Philip, one of the seven (xxi. 8). The fact mentioned about this man's daughters seems to show that the gift of prophecy was not confined to one sex. But there is much more here. Luke evidently records this as something unusual. Here is a family with special grace. The father has been distinguished for years. The virgin condition of the daughters is so mentioned as to intimate that it was a matter of choice maintained for the sake of their office. But what are they all doing here in the heathen town of Cæsarea? How is it that their home is here? We are told that this Philip is the evangelist and one of the seven, to remind us specially that he belonged

to the church in Jerusalem. It is ominous of the sad state of things soon to disclose itself under the shadow of the temple, that this gifted family is found in the city of Cæsar, and not in Jerusalem. The very spirit which made their roof a hospitable shelter for Paul and his companions would unfit them for a residence where he had been rejected who was Lord of all and whose spirit Paul possesses.

It was while Paul was at home in Philip's house that Agabus came—not from Jerusalem, as on a former occasion (Acts xi. 27, 28) but from Judea; for he, too, no longer, as it would seem, found a home in the city. This prophet set out in a very vivid way what awaited Paul at the completion of his journey. Like his Lord before him the Jews would deliver him bound into the hands of the Gentiles. Upon this announcement, not only those of Paul's own company, which included Luke himself and Timothy, but "they of that place," Philip, his daughters and others, entreated Paul to stay away from Jerusalem. His sublime answer shows how much better he understood the Lord's will than even they did. The Spirit warned, he certainly thought, not to deter him from his course, but to prepare him, and the love of his friends was now a hindrance instead of a help. But his determination to proceed let them into the secret of his profound conviction and so they acquiesce, with the words, "The will of the Lord be done." Their

conduct is admirable. His is marked with grandeur.

For the first time in the long journey which has reached its last stage now, the baggage is mentioned. This is not without its significance. Paul was going into the city with everything he had. He was leaving nothing behind to which to flee. We know well what was in this baggage (Acts xxiv. 17) but Luke makes no point of that here, for he aims only to show that Paul went forward as deliberately as if nothing but friendship awaited him. The mention of the man with whom the company was to find a home is full of meaning. He was a Hellenist, a man from Cyprus, a fellow countryman of those liberal-minded souls who had first offered the gospel to the heathen (Acts xi. 20). Moreover he was not a recent convert but belonged to the early disciples, to that generation which went everywhere preaching the Word. These sympathized with the work among the Gentiles. Mnason was just the man to lodge the Apostle to the Gentiles along with his fellow travelers from the foreign field. James welcomes Paul to the city, and is in full sympathy with his work, but it must be noted that it is not he who receives him under his roof.

SECTION XVII

THE GOSPEL REJECTED BY JERUSALEM FINDS REFUGE IN THE ROMAN CASTLE

Acts xxi. 17—xxiii. 35

Luke, at this stage of his history, has certainly made it clear that the church is established among the heathen. He showed how the gospel got its foothold at Philippi, where he sketched the beginning of things. He gave the history of its establishment in the great commercial center of Corinth. At Ephesus was found the consummation of the work. The city's leading sin was paralyzed by the preaching of the truth, and the church is so firmly entrenched that Paul commits its care to others, with the understanding that it can receive no further aid from him, and that the leaders shall see his face no more.

But while this work has been going on abroad in all these years, what has been done on the home field? What is the state of things in Jerusalem, where the gospel took its rise and where it had its first great triumphs? It is to the answer of this question in general that the history now leads. God's Spirit guided Paul to the city of his fathers that it might be demonstrated that the ascended Lord is finally rejected by his own people. It is

pretty plain that the body of Jewish believers might be tolerated in Jerusalem as a sect of Judaism. But Christianity, as it had now wrought itself out and established itself in heathendom, could not be allowed for a moment. A church in Jerusalem made up exclusively of Jews might be admitted, but a church composed of Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles meeting on a level was an abomination to Israel. James was the leader of the former, Paul of the latter. The two are brought face to face at this time.

In the last section Luke has left an impression of the solemn earnestness with which Paul made this final visit to the Jewish capital. But he has nowhere disclosed Paul's purpose in the visit. The apostle does not know himself whether its issue will be life or death. He was only sure that it involved great sorrow. It will not be forgotten that scarce ten weeks before this meeting with James, Paul composed the Epistle to the Romans. That epistle is peculiar in this, that it is the only one of all those written by him which fully declares the rejection of Israel. He devotes three chapters, the ninth, tenth and eleventh, to the subject. He shows that Israel's casting off is neither total nor final, yet for the present the nation as a whole is hardened, and salvation in consequence has gone to the Gentiles. In writing such things it would seem that he is preparing a way for himself among the Romans and justifying his abandonment of God's

ancient people. Why, then, when he wrote thus almost at the gates of Rome, does he turn round and go to Jerusalem hundreds of leagues in the opposite direction? God constrained him. It is to be shown just how inimical Jerusalem is to the ascended Lord. What Paul wrote to Rome about the obstinacy of the Jews is to be proved, proved both to himself and to us. The time is just twelve years before Titus' battering rams will be plunging their iron heads against the gates of the ancient city. Meanwhile its citizens are to have one more persuasive offer of the gospel that they may accept it if they will. If Paul called on the Athenians to repent, because God had appointed a day in which he would judge the world, why should not Jerusalem turn, whose doom was gathering black above it? The gospel as it was, the gospel as it had shaped itself in the mind and heart of the great apostle, had never been offered by him to Jerusalem. For what is said two years later to Agrippa (xxvi. 20) does not controvert this statement. Plainly, it is God who has now given him the opportunity to testify for him here (xxiii. 11). The call did not come as direct as when he crossed over to Macedonia for the first time, but it is none the less certain that it came from on high.

Before details are considered, it will be noted that Paul has successive opportunities to present the gospel, but is rejected in every one, first by

the mob (xxi., xxii.), then by the council (xxiii.), then by the spiritual chiefs (xxiv.), and finally by the political rulers (xxv., xxvi.). Even at Athens he gained a few converts. But during his two years' stay among the Jews he did not win one. He was permitted to glorify God in preaching his gospel to Israel, but not in gaining disciples among them.

At the outset it must be observed, what has not always been noted, that the "brethren" (xxi. 17) received Paul gladly. This welcome could not have been on the part of the believers generally, and yet it must have been representative. Luke certainly means something when he declares that the travelers were received gladly. It has not been sharply discriminated that nowhere is the church represented as taking any part against Paul. To be sure James and Paul come face to face, but does not Luke show that at once they see eye to eye? James and the elders hear the story of the conversion of the Gentiles "particularly" and the result is they glorify the Lord (xxi. 20). And thus that unity of the spirit which was noted in the last section is now complete, and God's people, from Jerusalem to Corinth, are one. The church over which James presides is different from those which Paul has planted, in that it is composed wholly of Jews, but the spirit is the same, and Paul is received as a messenger of God. But he has been slandered among the believers in Jerusalem. No wonder.

He has been slandered everywhere, so that he must defend himself even before his own converts, the Galatians and the Corinthians. James is anxious that Paul shall have an unreserved welcome among the many Jews who believe. He says they will hear that he has come. Hundreds know of his arrival already, for they have welcomed him. The words "The multitude must needs come together" (v. 22) are not genuine, and have no place in the corrected text. James has devised a plan by which Paul may purge himself of the false charges circulated against him. That plan is to join with four of the brethren in completing a Nazarite vow. He assures Paul that this course on his part will in no wise involve the Gentile brethren, for the church in Jerusalem has written and concluded that they shall observe no such thing. Paul, of course, knew this decree, but James' repetition of it assures the apostle that it is still held to be binding. Paul does not hesitate to adopt the course recommended. It is just a year since he wrote to the Corinthians: "Is a man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. . . . . Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called." (I. Cor. vii. 18-20). And so he took the four men, and entered into the temple to dwell there, in order to be free from accidental defilement. He had notified the officiating priest on what day the completing cere-

monies of the vow began (v. 26) so that at their expiration he, with the other four, might be discharged. The days were coming to a close when the riot blazed up.

Now the story so far is not related to show how James' plan miscarried. There is no evidence that in spite of the interruption it did not reach its purpose toward the church. The story is told, first of all, to show how Paul came to be caught by his enemies in the temple, and secondly, to prove the injustice of the Jews in assailing him at the very time when he was proving himself a strict adherent of Moses. In other words, at this very point (xxi. 27) the church passes wholly off of the stage and Jerusalem comes to view in its unbelief and malice. It was not believers who raised the cry against Paul, but "Jews which were of Asia." Whether James' conciliating device succeeded with the church or did not, does not concern Luke here, who is bent now on showing how badly the unbelievers behaved, and how James' charitable device sets out that behavior in black.

It is Jerusalem then which comes before us at this point. On this account there is no further mention of James or the church. We do not know where Peter or any of the other apostles are at this time. These do not concern Luke. He is again like himself, adhering closely to his task. The church in some of its members welcomed Paul. That must suffice on that point. But here

is this great city. Its people are in some sense, indeed in a deep sense, God's people. The Saviour is theirs. The gospel is theirs. What will they do with the Lord and his Word? This is the momentous question of the hour, and to this the history addresses itself.

Paul is patiently spending the time in some one of the inner courts of the temple. Some Jews of Asia, who have come to Jerusalem, no doubt to attend the feast of Pentecost, recognize him. The bitterness which they have conceived against the apostle in that distant province (xx. 19) attends and moves them. They know that in far away Ephesus he brought Jews and Gentiles together in the church and in this way made little of Moses' laws. To see him now in the austere guise of a Nazarite maddens them. They would look upon him as a hypocrite, and so, without calling on the temple police to arrest him, they lay illegal hands upon him. While holding him they address the crowd, and bring substantially the same charge that was put upon Stephen more than twenty years before (vi. 13). They say that Paul respects neither the Law nor the temple. And in addition to this they charge him with bringing heathen into the temple, the penalty for which was death. Malicious fanaticism can always stand on a very narrow foundation, and Luke gives such reasons as these Jews had for asserting that Paul had polluted the temple. Their evil eye had been on him before

to-day (v. 29). They had seen him walk the streets with Trophimus, whom they knew. And they "supposed" that Paul had brought him within the sacred precincts. Luke would show the malice of their hearts when he relates the flimsy pretext for their conduct. A riot is soon on foot. Paul is dragged out of the temple, lest the crowd rush in and pollute it. The place of worship was more sacred to these men than the worshiper. The latter they try to kill. The tribune stationed with his soldiers in the castle of Antonia on the northwest corner of the temple hears of the tumult, and comes quickly on the scene. Paul is arrested, not to say rescued. The chief captain tries to find out what is the cause of the disturbance. He can make nothing out of the discordant howls of the crowd, and so he starts with his captive to the castle. Luke gives an idea of the violence of the mob by showing how they pressed upon the soldiers. Paul is lifted from his feet and borne up the stairs of the castle on the shoulders of the Romans.

The apostle is the only cool man in this critical hour. He sees a passing chance to address his countrymen, perhaps to win them. He seizes on that chance. Very respectfully he asks leave, in the Greek language, of the tribune to speak with him. The officer having thought, as is plainly implied, that he had captured a rude Egyptian bandit is astonished to find his prisoner a man of culture,

and so exclaims, "Canst thou speak Greek?" By his language the tribune is sure that Paul is not the man who had raised an insurrection against the city, and had recently escaped into the wilderness after being routed by Felix. Paul declares who he is; he is not an Egyptian, but a Jew, not from the Nile, but from the north, and not of obscure origin. In saying that he belongs to Tarsus, he adds the words, "a citizen of no mean or insignificant city." The Roman officer would feel the force of that. Tarsus was in high favor with the Roman government, so that its inhabitants were exempt from taxation. And here was one of them. Perhaps Rome's officer would best favor him and grant his simple request to speak to the people.

The "defense" which follows is not an abstract, intellectual piece like that on Mars' Hill, nor is it like that in the synagogue in the Pisidian Antioch. It is the story of Paul's personal religious experience. It is a narration of facts in his own history, but so arranged as to be a powerful plea for his course of life and for the truth of the gospel. He begins in a most respectful and conciliatory manner—"Brethren and fathers, hear ye my defense." The heed they gave because he spoke in the Hebrew (Aramaic) language, implies that they rather expected him to speak in Greek and that they could have understood him in the latter language. The points of his address are three:—

I. His present beliefs and course of life could not

have issued from an original difference between himself and his hearers, for there was none (xxii. 3-5).

II. In so far as any difference existed at the present time it was to be accounted for by God's immediate dealing with him (vs. 6-16).

III. As to his affiliation with the Gentiles, God directly sent him to them. (vs. 17-21).

The sum of all this is that Paul could be and do no other without flying in the face of God. Or had his hearers been candid men some of them must have reflected that to persecute Paul was to oppose God.

Under the first head Paul makes three points: (a) he is a Jew, (b) but, while of foreign birth, he was educated in Jerusalem by one of its most famous masters, and according to the strict law of the fathers; (c) he was as zealous against the "way" of Christ as his hearers are now. The last could be easily proved by the records in the hands of the high-priest and the elderhood (v. 5). Or, briefly, in blood, in training and in religious opinion he had been what his hearers were.

This prepares the way for the second argument. A man so taught, and so zealous for what he had learned, how could he be so different now unless there has been a divine intervention? Every such change is an argument for God and for his direct and immediate agency in the hearts of believers. If nature is uniform, and there is no activity out-

side and above her laws, why in one hour should the persecuting bigot Saul become the broad-minded Paul, with sympathies as tender as Christ's, and a love as wide as human woe? Character is as stable as the hills and of itself will no more change than they will change their place. Paul was once as full of hate against the "way" as he is now full of love for it. Did any power in nature turn the salt Dead Sea into refreshing water? Paul's proof of his second point lies largely in his first one. God changed him. He tells how. (a) The scene on the persecuting journey to Damascus is described, in which he saw a supernatural light and heard a voice saying, "I am Jesus." As evidence of the light he calls to witness his fellow-travelers, though they heard (understood) not (ix. 7) the voice. The sound they got but not the sentiment. Paul relies for argument on the light and so (v. 11) repeats its mention, along with the blinding effect which it had upon him. (b) Ananias acted as God's messenger to Paul in this hour. Here the defense grows very skillful. First of all, Paul says his helper and guide was every way a good Jew, "a devout man according to the Law," and not only so, but having a "good report" of all the Jews in Damascus. That he was a "disciple" is not mentioned now as in the history in the ninth chapter. Again, Paul does not refer to the fact stated in the history (ix) that this devout Jew was divinely sent to him, but leaves the impression that he came of

himself. Again, this good Jew not only wrought a miracle, a proof that God was with him, in restoring Paul to sight, but explained to him that God had now chosen him to "know his will"—then he had not known it when he was like his hearers—and that he should be his witness to all "men." The word Gentile is avoided as yet. Again this same Ananias urges Paul to be baptized and wash away his sins. Then, notwithstanding his education and his zeal against the saints, Paul was still a sinner in need of divine forgiveness. Or, to sum up the argument on this head, it was God who strikingly arrested Paul in his former course and a reputable Jew guided him into his present one.

As to the third point in the defense, Paul, after his conversion and baptism in Damascus, did not seek to go to the Gentiles, neither did he wish to go, but he returned to Jerusalem desirous of preaching the gospel to those of his own blood. But here in this very temple (v. 17) which the mob charged him with polluting, God had appeared to him and in this temple commanded him to leave Jerusalem. He hesitated to obey, so eager was he to remain, and actually debated the question with God (vs. 19, 20) when the divine response came sharp and decisive: "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

The argument is complete and unanswerable. But the moment Paul utters the hated word Gentile, kept back in the fifteenth verse, the smothered fire

of fanatical rage burst forth. The Jews will not believe in God's mercy toward the Gentiles. And Paul, who was not permitted to preach before in Jerusalem, is now utterly rejected in his very first address to the people whom he loved. God's gospel is rejected with him. The hostility which greeted him on his utterance of the word Gentile is unmistakable in its violence. There is every Oriental expression of hatred and abhorrence. They cried out, they cast off their outer raiment, they threw dust into the air. The tribune, who probably had not understood one word of the speech, determines to know the cause of all this violence, and orders that Paul be scourged that he may confess his crime.

Luke has often had opportunity to show how much better Gentiles behaved toward the gospel than the Jews. Here (xxii. 25-29) he sets the spirit of the governments of the two in contrast. Paul had said once and again among his brethren, "I am a Jew." He had declared how his course at the beginning was approved by a devout Jew in Damascus. But it avails nothing. "I am a Jew" has no weight among Jews. So now in the castle of the heathen he says, "I am a Roman," when at once thongs fly open, chains fall off, officers tremble, and hostile purposes cease. The tribune even grows confidential and companionable, and tells how with a great price he purchased his free Roman citizenship. Luke shows triumphantly

how much better it is for Paul to be a Roman among the heathen than to be a Jew among his fellow countrymen. Among the former there is respect for law and human rights. Among the latter rights are trampled under foot and unbelieving hatred of the gospel and its minister have usurped the place of righteous order. Israel is fast hastening to its doom.

The people have rejected the gospel in the person of Paul, that gospel which must embrace the Gentiles or it is not of God. What will the council do? The tribune incidentally brought an answer to that question. On the morrow (xxii. 30), that he might after all learn why Paul was arrested by the Jews, he commanded the council to assemble and led Paul before them. The council that had passed upon Jesus and passed upon Stephen, shall have one more opportunity, and its last, to endorse the truth. The nation's supreme hour is come.

God led Paul step by step to this very spot where he now stands before the governing power of the Jews. We may be sure that the apostle found to the full that gracious help which Christ promised his followers (Matt. x. 19, 20) when they should be brought to trial. What Paul said and did in this council is not the outcome of passion or of cunning, but conduct inspired by the Holy Spirit. Hence Luke records the fact of Paul's "earnestly beholding" the council. It was a look of confidence and not of hesitation or of fear. It was a look of

inquiry whether there was or was not any chance for a verdict in the Sanhedrin in favor of the gospel. Without any formality Paul begins just where he had left off the evening before. He was conscientious when in his zeal he persecuted the church, he has been conscientious in planting and serving the church. The president of the council, the high-priest, orders him to be smitten in the mouth. The decision of Israel's case is quickly reached and Paul announces it—"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." (xxiii. 3). For the judge of God's holy Law, while apparently sitting in defense of Moses, was trampling him in the dust. Paul's language is like Christ's about the Pharisees—whited sepulchers, fair without, foul within. But it is also different. The high-priest was a beautified wall. A wall in those days was significant in the highest degree of a barrier. Judaism, as it was embodied in the high-priest, was a wall against the gospel. God would smite it down. He did so twelve years later.

The sycophants about the president's chair cry out, "Revilest thou God's high-priest?" Paul's reply is by no means an apology. He says, "I wist not that he was the high-priest." Which does not mean at all that he did not know who it was that commanded him to be smitten, or that he did not know who occupied the president's position. Neither is it ironical. It is Paul's solemn assertion that he did not know a man uttering such an unjust com-

mand as high-priest; he did not recognize him as high-priest but rather as a tyrant. Paul had the very highest respect for the office, but the man now in it was not worthy of it. "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (v. 5) is not Paul's apology. It is rather his significant declaration that Ananias cannot claim the protection of this Biblical injunction. He is not ruling, but is acting on his own hateful caprice. John the Baptist did not hesitate to rebuke Herod for his sin, and Jesus called the same man a fox. Governmental offices, high and low, are to be respected. And those who are in them must be honored when they honor them. But when they use them as an instrument of their own folly the proper person, at the proper time, may review and rebuke their conduct. If not, then the office preserves the man, however base, and it is no longer true that the man must preserve the office.

Paul sees at this early stage that he cannot win the council as a whole. He cannot get even a fair hearing. While abroad as a missionary among the heathen it was his custom when the Jews rejected him to turn to the Gentiles. His course is something similar here. He notices that the body before which he stands is composed in part of Pharisees and in part of Sadducees. He appeals to the former. He cries, "I am a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (v. 6). Thus in one sentence he lifts the matter at

issue out of the mass of ceremonial entanglements under which his accusers would fain bury it. Jesus made his apostles witnesses of the resurrection. This was their solitary theme and sole offense. And here Paul takes his stand and declares that this after all is the real accusation against him. It is not that he defiled the temple. It is not that he persuaded Jews to forsake Moses. It was that in Jesus he preached the resurrection of the dead. Jesus lived and died a Jew. He was "made under the law" (Gal. iv. 4). But when he came forth from the tomb endowed with eternal life he was no longer a Jew, no more so than is the Father (Rom. iii. 29) who raised him from the dead. Resurrection made him universal, and became the death-blow to all divisive ceremonial. Resurrection was the knell of Pharisaism. Hence when Paul writes that universal letter, the Epistle to the Romans, he begins it appropriately with a mention of the raised Christ, and weaves this doctrine into the whole discussion. If Paul found no difficulty in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles it was because his belief in the resurrection logically drove him there. Now the Pharisees stood stoutly for Moses. They were not ready to consort with the Gentiles. But they had a theoretic belief in the resurrection. There is this point of union between them and Paul. And he appeals to them if, perchance, the logic of their belief may move some of them to the position to which he as a Pharisee was

himself brought. It is not strange that Pharisees became preachers to the heathen, though at first sight one would have said their love of legal purity would have made them the last to burst its bounds. But they were one long stride ahead of the Sadducees, and, by their belief in resurrection, legalism was bound to give way, and to this belief Paul appeals. But he fails again. The orthodox party will stand by him as a champion of their side, but they will not follow him to the logical limits of that side. His bold declaration that he is a Pharisee leads to nothing but a squabble in which the Pharisees by physical force attempt to keep him, while the Sadducees with maddened hate try to get him that they may destroy him. Paul was in danger of being torn to pieces, but being a Roman, Lysias, the captain of the guard, was bound to protect him, and so he rescues him from the striving Jewish factions.

For two days Paul has seen nothing but strife and turmoil. He was but flesh and blood. God comes to cheer him (v. 11). The divine voice endorses what he has done: "Thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem." Then the apostle's calling the high-priest a whited wall was not in human passion, it was not a sin, and his cry in the council, "I am a Pharisee," was not a piece of worldly cunning. Heaven approves the whole of his two days' utterances, and assures him that the goal for which he longed shall be reached. Paul shall bear witness

at Rome also. The Lord has spoken it and it cannot fail. But how many trials lie between Paul and the city of the Cæsars! He has yet much to undergo before he can see the world's capital.

Luke's object in the next paragraph (vs. 12-22) is very plain. It shows the utter moral degradation of the Jewish council, and sets this degradation again in contrast with the order and justice of the Roman barrack. The tribune preserves the life which the assassins among the Jews would destroy. But Luke does not direct attention to the forty bloody-minded men, but to the council. As soon as he mentions them he shows how they made their purpose known to the council and how the latter became the willing tool of the conspirators. The council showed itself ready to work through these men of infernal spirit. The council had become a synagogue of Satan; the last vestige of truth had disappeared from it, its rejection of the gospel was complete, and we hear but little more of it. Its ruin will soon come and the once august body will assemble no more on earth. Not only its members, but the very office will be destroyed.

The concluding paragraph of this chapter (xxiii. 23-35) and of the section is in the same line with the last. It shows how the Roman preserved Paul and by what means he placed him beyond the reach of danger. Luke did not stop to show how Paul's nephew became aware of the conspiracy. Neither

does he help us to understand how the young man passed the guards and found access to his illustrious uncle. How is it that some one of the forty assassins did not get through that same guard, find his way to Paul and plunge the sword until now concealed under his mantle, into the apostle's heart? Luke is concerned with none of this. But when the tribune learns from Paul's sister's son of the conspiracy on foot it is plain that he is greatly impressed. The situation is graver than he had thought. For he orders out a small army, with soldiers of every sort, the light-armed men, the cavalry, the heavy-armed footmen. The gravity of the emergency is seen in the extent of the preparation against it.

Two things are to be noted in this paragraph. First, it abounds in details. There are many things which we would be glad to know at the moment when Paul leaves Jerusalem never to see it again. What were the thoughts of his great heart? Did he communicate with James and the elders? Did he have an opportunity to say farewell to his kinsfolk? Luke omits everything else to write minutely how the order and discipline of the Roman world rescued Paul and defeated the hate of Judaism. He tells the number of soldiers, the number of their commanders, he describes the journey and makes us to see the whole event as distinctly as if we had been there. We can almost hear the rattling of the soldiers' sabers, and the

clang of the horses' hoofs as they start down the road to Antipatris. If Luke lingers thus over the story and fills it with details he must intend to show how God's invisible hand could use the world power, which he had ordained, to serve him in protecting his servant from apostate Judaism. Those who have fallen from right are ever more mischievous than those who never professed the right. For in this case pure heathenism, with its natural sense of justice, did more to promote the kingdom than those who professed to know God, but did not. At the crucifixion of Jesus, Pilate was bad, but by no means so bad as the Jews (iii. 13).

The second point to be noticed here is the letter of Lysias. Luke thought it worth while to secure a copy of this document and present it here in his account. Why? Because it exhibits again the general care of the Roman for Paul when the Jews would destroy him, but more than all, to set forth that it was Romanism itself that saved Paul, and not the man who administered it. For Lysias is guilty of a falsehood in this communication to the governor. He writes that with an armed force he rescued Paul because he understood that he was a Roman. The fact in the case is already before us. Lysias arrested Paul, thinking he was an Egyptian bandit, and was about to scourge him when Paul claimed the rights of Roman citizenship. And these rights not only protected Paul, but forced Lysias to protect him. It was not the man that

succored Paul, but the government which God had appointed and was now using for gracious ends. The letter gives an insight into Roman law. The accused must have the accuser before him, and the charge must be proved. Lysias commanded the Jews, he says, to appear against Paul before Felix. But he intimates that the points in dispute are not serious, being nothing more than questions of Jewish law, and so far he speaks a good word for the prisoner.

And now that Paul is back in Cæsarea within a very few days after Agabus predicted his trouble, we see that his conflict, though sharp, had not been long. He is in prison, but he is safe from the malice of the Jews, and no doubt feels a sense of rest.

SECTION XVIII

THE GOSPEL REJECTED BY THE JEWS IS FORCED TO APPEAL TO ROME

Acts xxiv-xxvi

That the Jews as a nation refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah and so lost their religious standing in the world was one of the most stupendous facts of the period embraced by Luke's history. The profound impression which this failure made is reflected in the constant notice of it in the New Testament books. Its writers, themselves Jews, are painfully affected by it. It would not be difficult to show that the gospels, especially Matthew's, never forget the Jew's fatal conduct. It is noted again and again in the epistles, (Rom. ix. 1-5; x. 1, 2; II Cor. iii. 15; Gal. iv. 25; I Thess. ii. 14-16; I Pet. ii. 8). The Jew's course, so carefully exhibited, furnishes, though seldom condemned, an uncolored history to the reader as a sufficient justification of Israel's rejection.

The transfer of the divine favor to the Gentiles being so striking it is no wonder that Luke portrays the account at length. As we have already seen, he detailed in long paragraphs (chaps. vi.-xi.) how the gospel first went to the heathen. And here now his account becomes very full in showing the

completion of the matter in the obstinacy of the Jew.

The section before us is very much like the latter part of the preceding one. It covers a period of two years in which there is little advance. The stream flows in a circle before it flows on again. But on its surface we see the foaming hate of Jerusalem against the great preacher of the truth and the injustice which compels him to appeal to Rome. Surely the Jew has forfeited the mercy of the gospel. And yet that gospel hovered near him until it had to fly for its existence. While it was divinely intended that Paul should go to Rome, the Jew's infidelity and Roman official cupidity made it necessary.

Luke gives us first of all some notes of time. All along he has been most sparing of these. Five days (xxiv. 1) after Paul's departure from Jerusalem the high-priest comes to prosecute him. Jewish hatred is hot after the prey. It is but twelve days (v. 11). since Paul landed at Cæsarea on his way to Jerusalem. But when two long years have elapsed (v. 27) Paul is still in bonds. Mercy departs with slow steps. The Jew has abundant time for reflection and repentance. But after two years he is no better. The period embraced here is from the early summer of 58 A. D. to the autumn of 60.

The trial before Felix shows one step in advance in the perverseness of the Jew. When Jesus stood

before Pilate the members of the council took matters in their own hands, and drove the governor into doing as they wished. Here they come with the most abject flattery to the heathen who was their hated master. It may be that Tertullus, the hired orator, was himself a Roman advocate, as Baumgarten claims, but Luke neither makes it plain nor does he make a point of it. The first thing to which he calls attention is the orator's fulsome praise, which was in the main, as was then well known, untrue. Israel, in this speaker, can fawn on a heathen to get judgment against a man who has preached the gospel to the heathen. Tertullus, after applying an epithet to Paul which the apostle does not deign to notice, brings a threefold charge against him.

(a) Sedition on a wide field, (b) Heresy, "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (v. 5), and (c) Sacrilege, "hath gone about to profane the temple." Verse seven, with a part of the eighth, is not genuine according to the Revised version. To these false charges the Jews heartily assent. Paul makes answer as follows:—

I. Exordium, v. 10.

II. Sedition
- (a) The time too short, v. 11.
- (b) His conduct disproves it, v. 12.
- (c) No proof of it, v. 13.

III. Heresy
- (a) He believes the Jews' Scriptures, v. 14.
- (b) Has the same hope, v. 15.
- (c) He lives in view of that hope, v. 16.

IV. Sacrilege
- (a) He brought alms to his nation and offerings to the temple, v. 17.
- (b) He was found "purified" in the temple, v. 18.
- (c) The competent witnesses are not present, v. 19.
- (d) A challenge to those present as to his conduct in the council, vs. 20, 21.

But any analysis is but the skeleton without flesh, blood and life. The speech itself must be considered. Compare Paul's dignified, truthful exordium with the flattering mendacity with which Tertullus began his address to Felix. Paul merely says that he is glad to speak before one who has been so long in the midst of Jewish affairs that he is now an intelligent hearer.

As to the charge of sedition, it is but twelve days since Paul went up to Jerusalem. Half of this time was spent in the temple as a Nazarite, the other half as a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. There was little chance to foment rebell-

ion here. Moreover, the time being so short, the governor could "understand" on inquiry, whether the charge was well founded. As to his being disputatious or disorderly at any time or anywhere while in the city, Paul enters a sweeping denial. Sedition cannot be proved.

The accusation that he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes is met with the claim that he and the Pharisees are at one in their beliefs. First, they "call" his way heresy. They have devised the phrase, "sect of the Nazarenes," used here for the first time, but it is unjust, for Paul worships the God of the Jews. He believes the same Scriptures, he has the same hope, and, in view of that hope of a resurrection, he lives conscientiously. It may be well to observe that, by the same reasoning, the term sectarian, as applied to different denominations of Christians, to-day, is unjust. For they all have the same God, the same Bible and the same hope.

But why does Paul insist on the essential likeness between his faith and Judaism? Not only because it is true, but that he himself may find shelter under the Roman law. This law tolerated Judaism. It would not countenance a new religion. If Paul's teaching is fundamentally like that of Judaism he can claim the protection of Rome. It is here we see, for the first time, what all history since has repeated, that in reforms the old is intolerant and drives out the new. Joseph was of the same family and blood as his brethren, and would have gladly

remained in the household. But when he disallowed their evil ways (Gen. xxxvii. 2) they thrust him out. It is much easier to shake off the reformer than to reform.

Paul's defense on this point surely implies that within five or six days there had been a revolution of sentiment in Jerusalem. The Pharisees had defended him stoutly in the council less than a week ago. They are accusing him before Felix, for all his speech is pointed against them.

It has been a wonder to some how Paul could say that he believed "all things which are written in the Law and in the prophets." This mistaken wonder implies that while the members of the council might claim belief in the Bible, the apostle could not. The reverse is the truth. The Rabbis were charging Paul with the sin of which they alone were guilty. To be sure Paul preached that Gentiles could be saved without circumcision. He associated converted Jews and Gentiles in the church, thus making nothing of ceremonial distinctions. And for this he was accused of infidelity. But to believe the Bible is something more than to believe its letter and sometimes something different. It is to believe what God intended by the letter. If the Scriptures taught circumcision and other ceremonies, Paul knew their intent and their limitations. He knew and defined the object of the Law (Gal. iii. 24). He saw no antithesis between his teaching and that of Moses (Rom. iii. 31,

Gal. iii. 21). He looked upon the Law with great reverence and called it glorious (II Cor. iii. 7). As to the prophets he believed them, for was he not convinced that they foretold the very Jesus whom he preached and the leading facts in his history, his death and resurrection? And how could Paul's accusers claim to believe these same prophets when they denied him of whom they spoke? It was not Paul who was violating the Word. It was the Pharisees.

It is not without reason that Luke records this declaration of the apostle's faith in the Old Testament Scriptures. The very wonder which the statement excites shows the need of preserving it in the history. For those who stumble at it must have supposed that in some sense Paul's teaching ran counter to that of Moses. It does not, and this expressed belief of the apostle is needed testimony to the value of the Old Testament. His belief cost him everything dear to the human heart, property, rank, ease, honor. He certainly did not sacrifice these without good reason, and that reason could not exist without a diligent scrutiny of God's Word. He believed the Scriptures, as he had them, to be of God and pronounced them "profitable" (II Tim. iii. 16).

When Paul's defense comes to the third charge brought against him, only his tone, which we may be certain was tender, could save him from being severe. So far from polluting the temple, his

affection for it, not cooled by many years' absence, led him to bring alms and offerings, the latter to be presented in the temple (v. 17). Instead of defiling God's house he was found "purified" in it, observing its ordinances in quiet, apart from the crowd. Paul knew his rights. Those who found him in the temple were some Asiatic Jews. They only could be witnesses and they were not here. Such as were present could testify to his conduct in the council. And just here, before he concludes, (v. 21) he leaves the point about sacrilege, to press once more, in a way not to be forgotten, the question of resurrection, a question which put Pharisees in a very awkward attitude as prosecutors. He challenges them in this closing word—whose irony even the tenderest inflection could not conceal—what was his "evil" in the council except the avowal of his belief in their own distinctive doctrine, the resurrection of the dead, for which avowal they had fought in his defense. This surely would not conciliate his accusers, the hour for that is forever past, but it would stop their mouths and leave them in a bad light before the governor.

Luke concludes the trial with some notes about Felix. Nothing has been proven against the prisoner and yet the governor does not release him. Felix testifies to the lack of proof in that he makes Paul's further imprisonment exceedingly light (v. 23). The excuse that he gives for detaining Paul, that he might hear the chief captain (v. 22), is surely not

sincere. Lysias has already testified in his letter. Could he add anything that has not been brought out on the trial? Had this judge been righteous Paul would have been set at liberty. Luke now draws a picture of his character because it is a large factor in the forces that drove Paul to Rome. Hence we are told the appropriate themes of Paul's discourse in the audience of this man. We are informed of his quailing before the sermon on righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come. He was not convicted but he was frightened. We are told that his wife was a Jewess, a hint at the unholy relations between the two which were set in their true light by the timely, uncompromising words on upright conduct and self-restraint. Felix, like Herod Antipas, heard and feared (Mark vi. 20) but he did not reform. In the face of the truth that he has heard he seeks a bribe again and again, and after two years of illegal delay to do justice he crowns his infamy by sacrificing an innocent man's liberty on the altar of his own selfishness. Paul, whom Felix respected, is left in chains, a bribe for the favor of the Jews, whom Felix despised. And now a new governor comes to the province of Judea, and Paul must tread the weary round of trial and defense once more. Festus was a better man morally than Felix, but Paul, and the gospel whose exponent he was, fared no better in his presence.

It will be noticed in a single reading (chap. xxv.)

that Luke does not give the details of this second trial in Cæsarea. In the previous one we have a full account, the speech of Tertullus, the reply of the apostle, and then a picture of the unjust judge. Here we have only the outline of the legal proceedings, but not a little about him before whom they were held. Luke wishes us to know Festus, for it was the governor's crooked course that compelled Paul to appeal to Cæsar, and so Festus is the principal figure in the picture now held up to view.

The notes of time to which Luke again resorts serve to set out the active, busy man who goes about his new duties with alacrity. He was quicker at work than at justice. He comes to Cæsarea and rests the next day. The third he is off for Jerusalem. The enemies of Paul seize on the opportunity of his visit to renew their case against the apostle. The answer they receive (v. 4) is not favorable to their plans. The governor moves rapidly. He is going back to Cæsarea "shortly." He stays in the city but little more than "ten" days and the very "next" day (v. 6) after reaching home Paul is put to trial once more. But the notes of time continue. If for some reason Festus could not report Paul's case to Agrippa until the king had "been there many days" (v. 14) he claims at least that he had tried the apostle "without any delay." And when the king expresses a desire to be brought before the apostle the prompt

answer is: "To-morrow thou shalt hear him" (v. 22). It is this active spirit, impatient of delay, that must have incited Festus to interrupt Paul (xxvi. 24) in his defense. He probably felt that the prisoner was talking too long. In the hands of this nervous man of dispatch it might be supposed that the unjust bonds would quickly fall off. But instead, in just the place where Paul's liberty is concerned, Festus tarried "many days" (v. 14).

The Jews who opposed Paul are noticed once more and finally. There is nothing new, and so the story is brief. And because it is not new it is terrible. It is two years since some desperate men proposed to assassinate Paul (xxiii. 12). The council assented to their plan then. They have adopted it now (v. 3). Is not the gospel bound to leave the city whose spiritual rulers have become murderers? And yet how slow mercy is to depart and judgment to fall. Of the trial Luke says only a word. The charges are not mentioned this time, but from the brief notice of Paul's reply (v. 8) they must have been identical with those presented before Felix. They were proved false then, but the Jews have nothing better now, and Festus sees their groundlessness quite as readily as did Felix. But Festus is like Felix in another respect. He was "willing to do the Jews a pleasure." Convinced of Paul's innocence he yet proposes to send him back to Jerusalem to be tried before himself. But Paul has now stood before him and has

been denied justice. What likelihood was there that he would gain it in a second trial where everything would turn on Jewish laws and questions about which Festus knew nothing? And thus after many details Luke has led the story to its climax. Paul has but one resource left. Festus will not release him; to go back to Jerusalem is death. He appeals to Cæsar. It is a radical step, but the apostle's speech of appeal (vs. 10, 11) completely vindicates his course. The malice of the Jews and the venality of the two Roman governors brought it about.

Festus is certainly nonplussed by the apostle's sharp turn. The governor knows what promptness is and where he failed in it the prisoner defeated him. His injustice has left him in an awkward place. He refused to release an innocent man and that man has appealed to Cæsar. How will Festus stand before Cæsar in this case? No wonder that he "conferred" with his council (v. 12). But they could not help him out of his own trap in which he was caught. The cry "I appeal" was omnipotent in the Roman empire, and so the governor must say: "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go."

From a time two years earlier in this history, that is, from the time that Paul's speech was concluded on the stairs of the castle in Jerusalem, up until the present hour, Luke has made another feature of the story plain as day. It was not men, Lysias, Felix, Festus, but the Roman constitution,

that shielded the apostle. Lysias would have scourged him, but the law of Rome forbade it. Both Felix and Festus would have released him to the Jews, but the law stood in the way. Festus would have sent him to Jerusalem for trial, which simply meant assassination on the way thither, and Paul saved himself by appeal to the Roman statute. Shall it be said that the law was merely adventitious? Or must we look deeper? Did Paul simply take advantage of what he found, or did he who ordained the powers ordain them that they might be found at this time by his servant? Certainly the God who saved Peter from Herod's sword by a miracle is wise enough to have created an empire to save Paul by law. If the Samaritans were preserved for six hundred years to be a stepping-stone from Judaism to heathenism, the imperial constitution may have been formed to preserve the gospel in its beginnings in that same heathenism. When the famine is pressing hard on Jacob in the promised land he finds that God has gone before and prepared sustenance for him in Egypt. The Jews had a constitution superior to that of Rome, but its officers had trampled it under foot. Felix and Festus were no better men than the Sanhedrists, but law was still supreme in the empire.

But before Paul sails for Rome, Luke has another matter to record—the apostle's speech before Agrippa II., son of Herod who was eaten by

worms, great-grandson of Herod the Great, and grand-nephew of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. He was about thirty-three years old at this time, and died in the year 100 A. D., the last of the Herods, and, as a descendant of Mariamne, the last of the Maccabees. He ruled the little country east of the Jordan called Trachonitis, and had been king now ten years. It was before him that Paul was brought. Luke shows how, and records the speech made, that the reader may have a further view of the character of Festus, that it may be made clear as sunlight that Paul was unjustly held in chains, and that it may be seen how the apostle persuaded men.

Apparently Festus and Agrippa were friends. The king had come to salute the governor. But he had been there "many days," spent no doubt in royal festivities in which Paul was forgotten. At the end of these the governor addresses himself to business again and tells the king about Paul. He rehearses the story already well known to the reader of the book of Acts, so that it might be asked, Why is it repeated? It is Luke's fashion to hurry to the point which he wishes to make, and then linger before he makes it. How did Paul spend the two years in Felix's prison? There is not a word. But Luke gave every step leading up to Paul's appeal, and now he gives every one leading up to the defense before Agrippa, even though he must tread a former path again. But in Fes-

tus' rehearsal of matters some things are significant. Why does he burden his guest with a matter of business? Because he is a Jew and may help the governor in the trouble which he has brought upon himself. In telling of Paul's trial Festus speaks altogether in general terms with one exception. This single item was "of one Jesus which was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (v. 19). Judaism was allowed by Roman law. But might not this belief in the resurrection of Jesus be an excuse for sending Paul to Rome? Apparently Festus has caught at this straw. He proceeds to explain how Paul came to appeal. And here again, as in the case of Lysias in writing his letter, Festus does himself more justice than he shows to the truth. Festus says that "because he doubted of such manner of questions" he was about to send Paul to Jerusalem. But Luke leaves the decided impression (v. 9) that this was not the governor's reason. It was to gain Jewish favor, and that too when he knew "very well," as Paul told him to his face, that the man on trial was innocent. His unjust proposal turned against him, and now he pretends that the appeal occurred because he had an honest doubt. And Lysias rescued Paul because he "understood that he was a Roman" (xxiii. 27)! Little did these men think that the eye of God was upon them, and that what they said and wrote was noted so that it has been scanned by centuries and will meet them at that

resurrection of which their prisoner preached. "How little do men think that the secrets of the most private letter, the counsels of the cabinet, the movements of kings, of governors, and of ministers of state, of military chiefs, and their men, no matter who or what, are all open before God, who sees all and forgets nothing."

While the perplexed governor is seeking advice he must have been happily surprised at the interest of Agrippa in the matter, who courteously expresses a desire to hear Paul. The answer is prompt: "To-morrow thou shalt hear." If Agrippa is to give advice, he is astute enough to withhold it until he knows the facts. And so Paul must be heard again.

The morrow came and with it such an audience as had never greeted Paul before, a king, a princess, a Roman governor, the military officers, and the leading men of the city. He had, we may feel sure, a more intelligent company before him on Mars' Hill, but never one embracing so much of earthly rank and power. Paul's chains gave him this audience. But while he is a prisoner, it is noted that the king and his sister come before him with much display. It is not the judge now on the official seat in official robes, who hears Paul. It is rather a high-class audience present to hear the gospel. And Jesus, who promised such things (Mark xiii. 9), is fulfilling them. Festus, in presenting Paul to the audience, states some facts that bring the whole case into very small compass.

First, it was not simply a few, but the multitude of the Jews that desired the death of Paul (v. 24). Secondly, Paul was already found to have done nothing worthy of death. Thirdly, as candor would not suit Festus here, he says Paul has "himself" appealed to Cæsar, omitting the fact that official injustice compelled the appeal. And fourthly, we are here present now to find, if we can, some reason for sending the prisoner to Rome. Especially is the Jewish king looked to for aid on this last point.

Since Agrippa is judge in this case, he gives Paul permission to speak. Paul's gesture is noted. He stretched forth his hand. It can hardly be said with Abbott that this is "a significant and eloquent reminder that he, against whom Festus can find no definite accusation, is a prisoner." All this has just been acknowledged by Festus, and Luke need not at once repeat it. Such remarks at the opening of discourses (Matt. v. 2, Mark. ix. 35, Acts ii. 14, xiii. 16) serve to draw the reader's attention to the importance of what is about to be said. The speech which follows may be analyzed as to its contents as follows:—

1. Exordium, vs. 2, 3.
2. Statement of the offense charged, vs. 4-7.
3. Paul's experience as a Pharisee, vs. 8-12.
4. His conversion, vs. 13-15.
5. His commission from Christ, vs. 16-18.
6. For obedience to this commission the Jews sought to kill him, vs. 19-23.

7. Festus' interruption, vs. 24, 25.

8. Appeal to Agrippa, vs. 26-29.

The speech as an argument to justify Paul in believing and preaching the resurrection may be analyzed thus:—

1. This belief is no crime, for Paul has always been a Pharisee, whose prime article of faith is this same hope, vs. 4-6.

2. His accusers hold this very article and so are inconsistent in assailing him, v. 7.

3. Paul did not of himself come into the preaching of this belief, as his former opposition to it shows, vs. 8-12.

4. But Jesus' revelation on the Damascus road moved him to it, vs. 13-15.

5. And Jesus commissioned him to preach it, vs. 16-18.

6. Obedience to this heaven-given commission is the whole and sole cause of Jewish opposition, vs. 19-22, a.

7. Paul's teaching accords with Moses and the prophets, vs. 22 b, 23.

8. The interruption by Festus leads to the appeal and the conclusion, vs. 24-29.

The analysis may be exhibited briefly thus:—

I. The charge inconsistent
- (a) Paul was a strict Pharisee, vs. 4, 5.
- (b) Believed the promise made to the fathers, v. 6.
- (c) His opponents believed the same, v. 7.

II. The resurrection was preached only by divine appointment.
- (a) Paul's predilection was against it, v. 8-12.
- (b) Christ's revelation and commission changed his course, vs. 13-18.
- (c) He followed Christ's command, vs. 19-22 a.

III. Scripture proofs.
- (a) The Christ should suffer.
- (b) Should rise from the dead.
- (c) Should show light to the Gentiles, vs. 22, b 23.

But analysis here, as everywhere, must fail except in giving the mere outline of the thought. The draft of the house may give an idea of it, but it is not the house. Analysis cannot compass the emphasis, the suggestions, the implications, the suppressed and assumed premises of the speech. Exposition can do more.

It is because of the implications in the speech and its relation to Judaism that Paul is happy to speak before one who is "expert" in these things.

That Paul was a Pharisee was well known by all the Jews. They had opportunity to know him from his youth and young manhood spent among

them in Jerusalem. Were they willing they could testify to his Pharisaic connection during that time. To be a Pharisee was to hold to the promise of resurrection made by God to the fathers (v. 6). In this it is implied that Paul's sect had an ancient basis for its creed, for the creed was scriptural. And here now, by a happy turn, he shows that his own belief is wider than that of his sect. It is the earnest belief of the nation, for the "twelve tribes," and not merely Judah, serve God day and night to reach the national hope. Here the inconsistency of the accusation comes in with the suddenness of the lightning's flash, for what he was about to say could not have been anticipated, viz.: what all Jews believe they hold me as a criminal for believing. "For which hope's sake I am accused by Jews." The word "the" does not belong to the text, and dulls its point. This sudden sharp thrust is followed by a question which painfully suggests its own answer:—"What, is it thought an incredible thing with you if God raises the dead?" Will Pharisees deny their own leading doctrine? The inference is plain. They were not what they claimed to be. Paul was a consistent Pharisee. It was not he who needed defense, it was they. Several interesting things are implied in the address so far. In the words "twelve tribes," it is seen that the whole nation was represented among the Jews. Paul was himself of the tribe of Benjamin. Anna was of the tribe of Asher (Luke ii. 36). All

the Levites were certainly known (Luke i. 5). At least one family could prove its descent from Judah (Matt. i. 1-17). The tribes had long since ceased to be complete, but individuals from every one existed, all of whom were filled with the national hope, and yet most of them were the enemies of Paul. If the twelve tribes held the same hope with Paul, he virtually says that Phariseeism is the prevailing religion. It was. Agrippa, before whom Paul spoke, was well aware of this. The Sadducees might cut some figure in Jerusalem and in the council, but elsewhere they were nothing, either in influence or numbers. Their wealth and learning was their power. The mass of the people believed in the coming Messiah.

There are some differences between this speech and the one made on the stairs of the castle in Jerusalem The contradictions are only apparent and vanish before a little scrutiny. Here before Agrippa Paul does not hesitate to call the disciples whom he persecuted "saints," holy persons (v. 10), a term which would have been resented had it been used in the former speech before the mob. There he said instead, "men and women" (xxii. 4). In describing the scene on the Damascus road some particulars not given before are mentioned. The light was "above the brightness of the sun." They "all" fall to the ground. The voice spake to him "in the Hebrew tongue." It said: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." These

particulars would go to show before Agrippa that in that sublime moment Paul was calm and self-possessed. He noted everything. He did not fall down in a swoon. All fell before the power of the light. It was not a delusion, not a mere vision. It was a sensible reality.

In speaking of his commission (vs. 16-18) he omits all mention of Ananias and refers it directly to Christ. He seems to mass together, too, both what he heard at Damascus, and what was subsequently revealed to him in the temple (xxii. 17, 18). The point is that the commission was divine. And here he gives utterance to a profound fact not mentioned before in the book, but one which Jesus made known in his teaching (Matt. xii. 26, 29, 30), that the world of mankind is in the power of Satan. Paul was commissioned to turn them from this power and its darkness (v. 18). By implication this explains the Jews' inconsistent course against Paul. They were under the pall of satanic moral darkness.

In the twentieth verse Paul gives one item in the account of his work of which there is no record elsewhere. When did he preach "throughout all the coasts of Judea?" His ministry "at Jerusalem" had been very brief (ix 28-30, with Gal. i. 18). Such omissions in our record show that it is complete only in the point of giving a history of the development of the church. Whatever facts do not serve to show this development are not admitted to this treatise.

Paul makes a second sharp thrust at the Jews in the twenty-first verse. "For these causes"—for obeying the commission of the risen Christ—"the Jews caught me in the temple"—where they pray for his coming—"and sought to kill me."

Again Paul shows the harmony, not to say unity, between the Jews' Scriptures and his own teaching. He said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (v. 22). The Old Testament teaches the essential facts of the New. The salvation of the first generation of Christians had no other documentary foundation. Paul believed these Scriptures, he expounded and enforced them. If the Jews claimed to love them and to walk by them and then did not agree with Paul so much the worse for them. Again it appears that it was not he but they who were disloyal to Moses and the prophets.

Festus knows nothing about these Scriptures. He is getting weary. He interrupts Paul and declares him mad. Whatever is beyond the power of ignorance to explain is, to that ignorance which thinks it knows all, either folly or madness. To this rude characterization Paul replies most courteously, and then appeals to the man who does know. Agrippa, as a nominal or ceremonial Jew, believed the prophets to be divine messengers. But he too interrupts Paul. If Festus is coarsely blunt, the king is politely ironical. For whatever the interpretation of his words may be, the King James'

version of them does not gain the approval of scholars in general. Literally the words read:—"In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian." But is it little in time or in degree? And since the word Christian was not then in good repute, was it not contemptuous in his mouth?

Paul concludes with a most beautiful sentiment, that discloses the fervor and the faith of his heart. It shows, too, his estimate of things. Instead of their crowns and robes and offices, he wishes they had his standing with God, humble though it seemed. Instead of their pleasures and joys he wishes they had his. Instead of their showy worldly life with its transitory honor, he wishes they had his lowly life, the chains excepted.

As we look back now to the time when Paul was arrested until the present moment Luke has made two things very clear. He has massed his material in order to bring them to view. First, as Paul triumphed at Athens over the spurious learning of its philosophers, so at Jerusalem and Cæsarea he triumphs over the spurious creed of the Jews. If there was no miracle to rescue him in the last two years, like that which had delivered him from Philippi's jail, or like that which had rescued Peter, there was what was greater, not only most convincing speech on the part of Paul, but also the order of the great Roman empire. If the Jews were murderous and the Roman officials false, God was over all for the furtherance of his Word

in preserving its great preacher, delivering him from the people and the Gentiles to whom he was now sent (v. 17). The God who promised him that he should see Rome brought it about, just as when in Corinth he assured him that no man should set on him to hurt him (xviii. 10) it came out so. The Jews then did their best to defeat the Lord's promise, but the Roman Gallio defeated them.

And lastly, as Paul is on the eve of his departure to Rome, that which has been clear all along is once more set in the light. He has spoken freely, boldly, comprehensively, before Agrippa and the rest. The latter go aside and after consultation reach this verdict: "This man doeth nothing worthy of death." And the king endorses it: "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Cæsar." He has had four formal trials, one in Jerusalem and three in Cæsarea, in every one of which he came forth without conviction. He starts toward Rome an innocent man, and the Jews are left to the doom which their murderous hate of the gospel insured. The enmity to Paul is the last mention of them on the pages of inspiration. The last decade of their national existence is already entered.

The speech before Agrippa was sought (xxv. 26) that Festus might have something to write to Cæsar about Paul. It must have greatly disappointed the governor. But Luke wholly omits all mention of this feature of the last defense, for he

is not concerned with the troubles of Festus, but with the triumph of Paul.

SECTION XIX

THE GOSPEL ON THE WAY TO ROME

Acts xxvii—xxviii. 10

If this section had been compressed to a very few verses, followed by what remains of the book, it would have been felt that Luke's treatise had a logical and natural ending. But instead the end is not reached until this most graphic, most engaging section intervenes. It is absorbing in interest, and is not surpassed by anything in literature in its power to hold the attention and enlist the feelings. It is a story of the sea marked with a wealth of detail and full of exciting situations. What does all this signify? To say that Luke was on this voyage, kept a diary and transferred to these pages the results of his observations, is most likely true. But why did he transfer them? To make his story interesting? Then we must say, as on an earlier page, he has suddenly changed from the philosophic historian to the low level of the novelist. He is no longer tracing what "Jesus began to do and to teach," but is making a book. And the account, on that supposition, is no longer spiritual, but meteorological. It is about a storm at sea and not about the spread of the gospel.

If this section on its surface is one of the most

interesting and exciting in the book it is because the dress is worthy of its character. The climax of the history is reached in this, the next to the last paragraph of the book. It is the history of that supreme moment in God's dealing with men when his mercy forsook his ancient people and went to the world. To be sure the truth had been preached for years among the heathen and great centers had been established. But all this, after all, was not comprehensive. It still depended on Jerusalem. That dependence had ceased. The moment the ship which bore Paul left the pier in Cæsarea, that moment a new world begun. The old one left behind will now soon be laid waste for "many generations." (Isa. lxi. 4). If the gospel began at Jerusalem it was to continue from Rome. Luke and Paul could not help feeling the significance of this hour. As they sailed up the coast they looked upon the shores of the beloved but God-forsaken land for the last time. But they also looked forward to that new world to which they were going, where all was problematical except as they knew that God was with them. This accounts for the interest with which Luke writes. This explains his minute particularity.

But this section is virtually the close of the book. He does not propose to write how the gospel spreads in that new realm to which it was going. Indeed he does not know. But in the voyage to Rome and its various incidents Luke is taught and

Paul is taught and we are taught how that diffusion will occur. The story is a draft of the temple which is going to be reared. It will not give offense then if it is treated somewhat allegorically.

There is no little warrant for considering this Scripture in this way. When God would have Peter know his will about the social relations of Jew and Gentile and that the latter were now to be admitted to the kingdom, he showed him a strange picture—a sheet let down from heaven wherein were all manner of beasts. And in sight of that picture he taught him by a voice—"What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." Would it be strange if God should teach Luke and Paul by a natural occurrence what Peter learned in a vision? This section is a vivid picture. May the divine spirit not be instructing us here as the chief of the apostles was instructed on the house-top in Joppa? God spoke there. And in the sketch before us the divine voice breaks through again, and again and gives us guidance.

Abraham sent his servant back to Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. The mission was a most important one. On the right accomplishment of it, hung the promise of God, the promise of mercy to all nations. The man burdened with such an enterprise was sure to be thoughtful. He went forward in the dark. At last he reached the well where his commission was to succeed or fail. And now, at just this point, the story (Gen. xxiv) bris-

tles with details. Abraham's servant has his eyes open for everything. For it is among these otherwise insignificant incidents that he is to learn the Lord's will about a wife for his master's son. And so we read (v. 21): "And the man, wondering at her, held his peace to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." He was studying the situation into which he had come to learn its significance. So did Luke and Paul. Their voyage and its incidents became to them a picture of things to come in the Gentile world.

Another justification for looking at our section as in some measure a parable, is found in the closing chapter of John's gospel. And another justification is given, for if we can fix on the method of interpreting what is before us the interpretation will take care of itself. John's gospel seems to end with the twentieth chapter. But another chapter is added, "as if dictated by some after-thought," says T. D. Bernard. What is the meaning of this supplementary chapter? The account of the death and resurrection is complete with the close of the preceding one. But is there to be nothing about that great, untried work on which the disciples are about to enter? Yes, they must have a lesson on that. They are fishing. That is well. They had been fishing once before when Jesus directed them and also taught them that henceforth they should catch men (Luke. v). That lesson is repeated by John with varied circumstances.

Like the section before us the story is full of details. We are told who and how many composed the company, and how they came to "go a fishing." It is noted that Jesus "stood" on the shore. The distance of the ship from the land is given. The ordinary act of Peter's pulling on his coat before he swam ashore is not overlooked. And it was a "fisher's" coat. The exact number of the fish is given. They come to land in the little ship. They find not simply a fire, but its condition is noted—a fire of "coals." These details, and there are more of them, show the importance of the occasion, the impression which it made. They are wanting in the former similar miracle. Now from this concluding story in John's gospel the disciples would learn that Jesus would direct them in catching men and give them divine aid, but that he would guide them from the shores of the other world. For he was not now with them in the ship as in that earlier miracle. Since he dined with them they might expect his fellowship. And from what follows in the chapter it is learned that their ruling motive was to be love for him and his sheep. And the chapter closes with a picture in which Jesus, the risen Lord, is moving on, going somewhere, whither John does not say, and his disciples are following.

The section before us is similar. It speaks of the future. Its many particulars show its importance. It may be noticed first that it is a sea story. The

sailing is particularly described. Before Paul gets to Rome he is on three different ships. Nautical terms and phrases abound. The ocean's waves, the wind's power, the roar of the breakers, sound in our ears. Has this particular feature of the section any significance? It is in the book of the rejection of Jesus, the gospel according to Matthew, in the very opening of it, that we read the quotation from Esaias: "The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim by the way of the sea. . . . Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which sat in darkness saw great light." The way of the sea was the way in which the light came to Galilee of the Gentiles. It was a prophecy reaching much wider. The Jews were not sailors. The Gentiles inhabited the sea shores and the isles. Luke notices every one they touch. The light is going again "by the way of the sea." It has set out to kindle a beacon flame on every cape and headland, on every isle and continent. And that our story confines us so strictly to the sea is a token of all this. The gospel has at last reached that highway that leads out to all the world in all centuries. Christ is Lord of the sea. The story of his walking upon the water comes to mind here. It must have come to the mind of Paul and Luke. They would remember its context (Mark vi. 30). We must recall it, or the act becomes a mere exhibition of almightiness. The disciples had returned from a preaching tour throughout Galilee. John the Baptist had

been beheaded. Jesus now leaves Herod's jurisdiction for the day, goes beyond the Jordan to Bethsaida and feeds the five thousand. The significance of this miracle he makes known the next day in the synagogue at Capernaum. He is the bread of life. After the multitude is fed he "compels" the disciples to get into a ship and go before him. During the night he comes to them walking on the water. Must it not have dawned on them by and by that as he had aided them in supplying the wants of the thousands on land so he would be with them by and by on the sea? They had returned from preaching, from ministering the bread of life, which was himself. They find on their return the inimical state of things created by Herod. And Jesus now, still dealing with them as missionaries, drives them to the sea and shows them by his coming to them in the storm how he will be with them to the ends of the earth. The miracle of walking on the water was more than an act of power and mercy. It was replete with prophecy. It is re-enacted in the section before us. Paul has been before the last of the Herods. He is forced to the sea. The Lord will be with him on the waters to teach him about the things to come in the Roman world.

It must be noticed how Luke came to mention the islands, and in one case the mainland. In every case protection and shelter from the adverse wind was given by them. The sea bore them, the

islands shielded them, but the wind was always against them, except in one case, when it deceived them (v. 13). It will not be forgotten that a wind once threatened the life of him who gave the gospel (Mark iv. 38). In the significant and discriminating language of Mark, and Luke's gospel is similar, Jesus arose and "rebuked" the wind, but "said to the sea, Be still." There was condemnation of the storm, but only a command for the waves. Are we not reminded by this reproof of him who is elsewhere called the "Prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2)? And can anything be rebuked in which moral responsibility is not in some way implied? If Matthew makes Jesus rebuke both wind and sea it is only because that evangelist's purpose in writing his account is not served by careful discrimination. Now, our section shows how the islands secured the voyagers against the winds. They sailed under the lee of Cyprus to escape the northwest blast (v. 4). Next they sailed over the sea off (not "of") Cilicia and Pamphylia for the same purpose, and landed safely at Myra (v. 5). As they pursued their journey they did not reach Cnidus, but only "came over against" it, and now took refuge again from the wind under the lee of Crete (v. 7). With difficulty they pass the headland of Salmone, but having succeeded in this they reached another city, Lasea. In spite of wind the gospel gets to one populous port after another. In the Fair Havens Paul,

already three times shipwrecked (II Cor. xi. 25), and not unacquainted with the habits of the sea, gives his advice (v. 9). But he is not heeded, for the south wind deceives them and the great storm, with its great heathen name Euroclydon or Euraquila, sets in. For the wind suddenly changed and came violently over Crete from the northeast. But again they find help from an island. Under Clauda they take aboard the boat which had been towed at the stern, and they strengthen the ship by passing cables around her waist, or perhaps around her lengthwise from bow to stern. And finally the island of Melita receives the whole company when the ship has gone to pieces.

The islands wait for God's law. They will receive it and shelter it, and the blast of spiritual opposition emanating from Satan cannot hinder it.

The ship with its company on board, out on the stormy sea, was a striking picture of the Roman empire. That great nation had a foundation as uncertain as the rolling waves underneath this vessel. If storms came it was sure to go to pieces. The ship had on board two of the great elements of the nation, the soldier and the man of commerce. And it had the gospel in its greatest representative. Luke never once mentions Paul's chains. But one thing he makes very prominent—how Paul's influence grew from first to last on that vessel so that whatever was saved from the storm and wreck was due to him. He starts with favor.

Aristarchus (v. 2) and Luke, Paul's friends, are permitted to go with him. At Sidon the apostle is allowed to refresh himself (v. 3). His advice in the Fair Havens (vs. 9-12) is not acceptable, to be sure, but, prisoner though he was, he must have already gained a tangible standing in the ship's community or how could he dare to advise at all? When the storm is at its height Paul stands forth again (vs. 21-26), this time not to advise, but first of all to rebuke—"Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me." They may have thought when they neglected his admonition at Fair Havens, "What does this priest of religion know about matters of business?" And so the "more part," along with Julius, believed the master and the owner of the ship, all being in ignorance that all business has a moral side which the man of God may understand better than he who conducts that business. Both traffic and arms must fail when they contravene the will of God.

But Paul does more than rebuke. He cheers. He inspires hope. He promises safety, and he confesses the God whom he serves. It is very significant that where all their gods were failing them in the storm, the God of the Jew was about to bring deliverance to the whole company. The time is coming when this will be repeated on a national scale. The things to come are here in embryo. But Paul goes still higher. He virtually commands (vs. 30-32) and the centurion and the soldiers execute his command. From this on he is the lead-

ing spirit. For a fortnight they have had no regular meal. A cold plunge in the sea is ahead of them. Weakened men will not be equal to the struggle for life in the raging surf. Paul orders a meal, takes the head of the table himself, institutes Christian worship, in asking a blessing, and begins to eat, and all now eat with him. At just this point (v. 37) Luke mentions the number of the souls aboard the ship, a counted number given to Paul (v. 24) and not one lost. When the crisis comes Julius risks his own life before the stern Roman law (vs. 42, 43) in order to save Paul's. For had the prisoners escaped the soldiers must have answered for them with their heads. The climax in Paul's influence appears when the island is reached. Faith in him is so great that now again, after more than two years, miracles appear, and the rich grace of God can manifest itself in the person of his servant. It is a token of the fall of Israel that from the restoration of Eutychus to life (xx.) until this hour, or from the moment that Paul turned his face, more than two years before, toward Jerusalem until now when he is at the gates of Rome, the divine energy could not show itself. It is given again on Roman soil.

If God gave his servant such an influence in the little Roman world compressed in the ship, it becomes evident what is before the gospel in the empire itself. At first it must be heard yet may not be heeded, but at last it will prevail, and nothing

will be conserved except what is conserved by it. What was given to Paul in the ship was saved. All the rest went to the bottom.

The spirit of Paul throughout the whole terrible voyage is made clear by Luke. He was no idler. He did not sit apart in solitude awaiting his work when he should reach Rome. He is one with the whole ship's company from the start. He advises for the common good of all. Of course he prayed for all. He cheered and encouraged. When they finally reached land he gathered sticks with the rest. It was before this that he had been caught up to the third heaven (II Cor. xii. 2), but he did not stay there. In this voyage he was a great, brave, sweet man among his fellow men. We may be sure he will be such when he comes to plant the gospel in Cæsar's household.

This labor and spirit on his part during the two terrible weeks of storm bear instructively on another point in the story. Two years before, while Paul was in Jerusalem, God said to him that he must bear witness at Rome (xxiii. 11). After the storm had raged for days, this promise was renewed to Paul (xxvii. 24) and in addition to it he got the promise of the lives of all who sailed with him. Paul declared that he trusted this promise. "I believe God that it shall be even as he told me" (v. 25). Why does he not sit down then, and let God bring about what he has ordained, for how can God's word be broken? Why, on the contrary, does

Paul begin from the hour that he got this assurance to labor earnestly to realize it? How, after he has the divine promise that every soul aboard shall reach land alive, how, after this, can he venture to say, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved?" (v. 31). For if the sailors desert, who is to guide the ship, to strand her safely on the beach? Ah, Paul did not know the frightful perversions that in after ages were to caricature his own blessed doctrine (Rom. ix. 11-24). "A right and perfect reliance on God, in so far from excluding human acting and working, that reliance is the most original and the most powerful spring of all human movement and action; just as on the other hand the full measure of all human self-action has complete reliance upon God for its necessary foundation." As Paul labored on the ship, in harmony with what God's promise made certain, so it is evident he will labor in Rome.

The story of the sea voyage reaches its conclusion on the land, just as the whole journey, when finished, will bring us to the capital of heathendom. Have we not again the Roman world in miniature in the island? Four things are made conspicuous in the three months'stay on Melita: the hospitality, the serpent that fastened on Paul's hand, the healing, and the beautiful charity at the close when they sent away Paul and his two Christian companions with "many honors."

Paul and all the rest were kindly received. It

was the late autumn of the year 60 A. D. The natives flock down to the beach where the ship went to pieces. They note the sad plight of all as they escape from the surf. A cold rain is falling to add to the general discomfort. And so the barbarians make a fire. It must have cost some effort where everything was water-soaked. But not only do the people show kindness but the "chief man" is hospitable too. For three days his house furnished shelter and rest. Surely Paul has a token of the spirit in which the ministers of the Word are to be received in the new realm to which the gospel has come.

But the natives have just begun to show the generosity of their disposition when the event occurred that impressed their simple hearts powerfully. Paul, in gathering up a pile of branches, has without knowing it brought a torpid viper with them and cast all on the fire, which was apparently not very hot yet. How natural after this act that he should hold his cold, wet hands near the kindling mass to get a little comfort. The maddened reptile darts out and seizes the hand so close to him. The incident does not escape the notice and the wonder of the barbarians. The coolness of Paul and his quietness indicate that he saw much more in this than they possibly could. Since Dean Burgon's masterly vindication of the canonicity of the last twelve verses in Mark's gospel, its eighteenth verse, "They shall take up serpents," may be trusted. It

is only as the messengers of the gospel have faith to carry it to its furthest bounds that they receive its most striking proofs of genuineness. Paul is virtually in Rome and here he realizes the truthfulness of this promise made by Christ. The serpent's venom does not hurt him. But does Luke record this story only because it is miraculous? Does not Paul's calmness suggest that he saw a greater significance here? It is the beginning of the gospel in its intent to embrace the world. We have seen in earlier pages of this book how each initial step was attended by some exhibition of Satan's opposition. In Samaria was Simon the magician. At Cyprus there was Elymas, who was a child of the devil. At Philippi was the maiden with the spirit of Apollo. As Paul looked at the serpent hanging upon his hand, he could have no fear of fatal effects, for had he not the repeated promise that he should see Rome? And must he not inquire, then, in his own thought, as to the meaning of this startling incident? And would it not be most reasonable, while knowing, as he did, whom the serpent symbolized, to think of him—of "him who had the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14) but could no longer exercise it successfully against the power of the gospel? Paul might be certain that the truth, in permeating the Roman world, would rouse an opposition now latent, but an opposition which was sure to be overcome.

Luke makes the barbarians prominent in this

part of the story. Whatever may be the significance of the accident which befell Paul their reflections, now on one side and now on the other, show the terror with which they viewed it. They knew the snake was venomous. They knew it had bitten Paul. There could be no mistake here, and their conclusions, though wrong on both sides, attest that we have here an undoubted miracle.

Other miracles follow. They are of a more pleasing character. It was a scene of terror when Jesus subdued the demon in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mark i. 23-26). It was one of peace and beauty when later in the day he subdued the fever in Peter's household, and afterward in the twilight of the same day laid his hands on others that were sick. So here. The horrible serpent is cast into the fire, and now Paul enters the household. The father of Publius is dangerously ill. He too has a fever, and Paul lays his hands on him after prayer, the hand that just now overcame the serpent, and he is healed. Others experience a similar benefit. Let the Roman world rejoice. The balm has come that is to undo the ills that sin has wrought. It would be strange if during the three months' stay on the island Paul had not preached the gospel. There is no mention of this, however Luke is giving the outline of good things to come, and he need not mention that which we know to be the cause of all.

In the end a beautiful benevolence shows its face.

The presence of Paul and his two companions made the little island blossom with charity. Of course the missionaries were stripped of everything in the wreck. Their loss is made good, and more than good (v. 10). In the end the ministry which has suffered much to carry the gospel into the world, will receive a rich reward in reaping the fruit of the love which has been sown (Mark x. 30). What was done in this island will be done in all islands in all time. Melita is so far a microcosm.

SECTION XX

THE GOSPEL REACHES ITS INTENDED LIMIT

Acts xxviii. 11-31

Jesus assured the apostles at the beginning that they should be his witnesses from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, "unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (i. 8). The latter boundary is now reached. For it is while Paul is in Rome that he can say of the gospel that it "was preached in all creation under heaven" (Col. i. 23, Rev. Ver). The commission was fulfilled for that generation when Rome was reached. And therefore this section closes the book.

The end appears to come abruptly. It leaves unanswered several questions on which we were led to expect light. What was the outcome of Paul's appeal to Cæsar? There is no answer. What was his relation to the magnificent Roman church of whose faith he wrote three years before that it was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. i. 8)? The church is not mentioned. What were Paul's triumphs in that Rome which he had struggled so long to see? Did he gain that "fruit" (Rom. i. 13) for which he had come? We are merely told that he reached Rome and had an uninterrupted ministry. What is to be the future of

these Jews who have rejected the gospel so violently and rejected it finally here in Rome? The impression left is that they have rejected it forever. One must say this with the utmost diffidence in face of the glowing argument of Baumgarten that just the opposite is made known in this closing section. He has made Luke teach here what is only taught elsewhere (Rom. xi) and what Luke did not set out to teach. If our account gives even a hint of the future of Israel, most minds will be too slow to take it. The book of Acts is not concerned about the Jews' destiny. It traces the course of the gospel, shows how a church was formed, a church composed of believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. At the same time the opposition of the Jew all along has been made clear. That opposition drove the gospel to the heathen. It drove it to Rome. Luke has only two things left to note, the last stage in the journey to Rome, and the consummation of the Jewish opposition. They are judicially blinded and hardened. Now Luke's aim being of this character and having this rigid limit, he cannot answer even related questions. He is not writing the history of Paul, but of the gospel, and so he does not tell us what became of Paul. For the same reason he dropped all mention of Peter and Barnabas and of the other actors prominent at the first, whenever their work ceased to be connected with the development of the church. We know the name of the artificer who

built the tabernacle in the wilderness, we know who aided him, we know their skill and fitness for the work (Ex. xxxi. 1-6), but we know nothing further. We are not told what reward they received for their masterly service or how or when they died. It is the tabernacle that the history follows and not the men. We have been following the church, but the men only so far as the enthroned Christ used them in bringing it to its destination.

In the piece before us Luke is concerned first of all in bringing Paul to Rome. The noble Julius is not again even referred to, if the sixteenth verse should read as in all recent texts:—"For when we came to Rome, Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." For more than this the King James' version has little authority. And this verse is the only one in the section to show that Paul remained a prisoner any time. The last two verses would leave the impression that he was now a free man. Paul's chain is not before us. The journey occupies the field of vision.

They started in a ship of Alexandria. The name reminds us of the one in the sixth verse of the preceding chapter. But Paul starts now among wiser men. These had "wintered" in the island, and had not recklessly dared the deep as did that former crew. The very ensign, Castor and Pollux, mentioned without a hint of condemnation for its heathenism, shows the seamen's appreciation of

their danger. It is possible that the three days' stop at Syracuse (v. 12) indicates care in sailing. The wind was not as yet wholly favorable, for they came by a circuitous course to Rhegium. But now they can hasten on. The south wind that had deceived the former crew to the ruin and loss of all, is harnessed by these to bring them well nigh two hundred miles north to port. As another evidence of the prosperity of the journey we are informed that brethren were found at Puteoli who entreated for a long sojourn. At this point Luke looks back over the course thus far and calls attention to its character—"and so," under such favorable circumstances, "we went toward Rome" (v. 14). During this seven days' stop in Puteoli—Luke does not give one hint of the way in which the time was spent—news reached the great city that Paul was at last coming. Doubtless the brethren of Puteoli sent word. Thirty-three miles north of this port town the travelers would strike the great Appian way constructed centuries before. Sixty-six miles farther on, and forty-three from Rome, was Appii Forum, and ten miles still further was the Three Taverns. This long distance had been traversed by brethren from Rome to meet and to greet the apostle. It cheered his heart. Never before had a city given him a welcome on coming. It is a token that his work shall be a success from the start. Paul has power to guide a foundering ship to land, power to subdue the serpent's venom, and to allay the

fever's heat at Malta, but this courtesy from Rome helps him. The weaker can strengthen them who carry the great burden of the gospel. This meeting with the brethren lays Paul's heart open to view. It shows the weight of responsibility which he carried. Can the gospel after its long course run the final stadium and reach the goal? The welcome given so far from the city's limits is a promise of victory.

When the city is reached the account dismisses every soul of the company except Paul. Even Luke appears no more. Of course this statement depends on the reading of the sixteenth verse as found in the Revised version. If we are told that Paul dwelt with a soldier that kept him it is only to explain why Paul called for the Jews to come to his abode. He could not go to them.

In the years of his ministry hitherto Paul waited for the Sabbath to come that he might meet the Jews. He does not wait now. Israel's decision must be made quickly. Paul allows himself but one day for rest, the day between his arrival and the third one on which he met the "chiefs." When they come before him the first thing is to have a common understanding Paul is a prisoner, but not a criminal. He had done no wrong to the Jews, nor had he violated their customs. But he came into the power of the Romans (v. 17). After careful and repeated examinations the Romans found no fault in him and would have released him

(v. 18) but the opposition of the Jews constrained him to appeal to Cæsar. But though he was a Roman citizen with all a Roman's rights, and though his hearers as Jews had but an uncertain tenure in the imperial city he had not come to bring any charges (v. 19). His presence was friendly, it was benevolent.

After this conciliatory introduction he proceeds to persuade. He places himself most affectingly among his hearers. It is for their own dear hope, the national hope, that he is bound with this chain (v. 20). He is suffering for the sake of that for which his hearers longed.

Paul has gained his first point. These chiefs will hear him. And they will hear him without prejudice and on his own merits. For they confess that they have not learned a word against him either by letters or by travelers from Judea. This is a remarkable fact. How is it that the malice of the Jews did not pursue him to Rome? It is assuming too much to say that Paul outstripped his enemies in the journey to Rome, that they had not yet had time to arrive. "Brethren" had come (v. 21) and they spake no harm of Paul. May we not rather assume that the teaching of this verse is that Paul was to have an unbiased hearing? The Jews in Rome, in the providence and guidance of God, were to have the gospel placed before them without any entanglements. Its preacher was to be every way acceptable whether the preaching proved to be so

or not. This is the meaning of these verses that set before us this preliminary interview. Paul could so speak that these Jews "desire" to hear him. The confidential reason which they give is that they know the ill repute of "this sect," but they are ready to consider its claims and will listen to Paul in its vindication (v. 22). It is in this spirit that they appoint a day for the hearing, and that many come.

When the second and final meeting occurred, Paul brings before the Jews a twofold topic, the kingdom of God, and its relation to Jesus. This phrase, "kingdom of God," so frequent in the gospels, is used very sparingly in this book, especially in the sense of the present instance. In Samaria Philip preached the kingdom of God (viii. 12). When Paul came to Ephesus he did the same (xix. 8). Just before the ascension Jesus spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (i. 3). Thus the phrase is used at the beginning of a new work, where a field is entered for the first time. It is comprehensive. When Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos, they did not "expound" to him the kingdom, for he understood that, but the way of God (xviii. 26). Paul's first aim, then, before these Roman Jews, was to make them know the character of that kingdom for which they hoped. Having such a theme he could be all inclusive. The whole subject could be presented just as it must have been when Jesus spoke of the things

pertaining to the kingdom of God. He would show that the vital principle in the kingdom was not natural, but resurrection, life, and that this was attained by submissive faith in Jesus in whom alone this life was found. When he came to speak of Jesus, after showing the nature of the kingdom, he doubtless would pursue the course followed again and again in other places (xvii. 3). The Christ whom the Jews looked for must be a sufferer, he must rise from the dead, and now this Jesus of whom they had heard met these conditions exactly.

Luke makes it a point to show not only how comprehensively Paul spoke, but that all this was revealed in the Scriptures. And the exposition of these lasted from morning till evening. The whole matter was brought before the Jews. We do not know of any other place where Paul talked so long. The meaning of all this is that his auditors were fully enlightened. Their subsequent act was intelligent and deliberate. They had all means to know what they were doing.

The result of this all day meeting was that some believed and some believed not (v. 24). They agreed not among themselves. Hereupon Paul pronounces in the words of Isaiah (vs. 26-27) the awful sentence of condemnation which had so long lingered, but is now fully due. From this hour, and who can tell how long, it is settled that Israel as a people has rejected Jesus, and that they are debarred from the Messianic blessing. Individual

Jews may receive the divine favor, but the nation for its faithlessness has missed the glorious promises of the prophets. These predictions could be realized only in accepting Jesus, and Jesus the Jews will not have.

But why does Paul utter these severe words of judgment apparently so hastily? In Ephesus he tarried three months before he withdrew from the synagogue and from the Jews (xix. 8). Usually hitherto when they refused the gospel he turned his attention to the Gentiles (xiii. 46). Sometimes he uttered severe words on parting from Israel (xviii. 6), but never anything so dire as this. It is to be observed, too, that the case here in Rome is just like all former cases, some believed and some believed not. Indeed in so far as the rejection is concerned it was not as pronounced as in all earlier instances. There is no violence, no blaspheming, no assault upon the apostle. Why, then, does he here shut the door of present hope against Israel? Would this not have been more appropriate in Lystra, where the Jews incited the rabble to stone Paul, or in Corinth, where they tried to silence him by Roman law?

Israel's judgment is pronounced in a foreign land because the gospel's limit is reached. The sentence was merited long before, but the justice of it is seen now that they have expelled the truth from the world's religious center and have driven it to the center of heathenism. Until Rome was

reached mercy still lingered. But when earth's bounds were touched she had no longer a place for her foot.

It will be noticed that we have here an expression not used before in reference to the Jews. It is said when "they agreed not among themselves," Paul uttered the word of exclusion. It was their lack of unity rather than the complete lack of faith, that condemned them. Some did believe. But that all did not do so showed that Israel in Rome was just as Israel had proved itself to be everywhere else. The elect (Rom. xi. 7) accepted the gospel but the body refused it. It is the exclusion of the mass which is here implied and not the exclusion of individual Jews who may still be saved if they will. That some did certainly accept Jesus as the Messiah when he preached in Jerusalem cannot be doubted. But their faith did not answer for the lack of the same grace in the rulers, and so did not prevent Jesus' awful words on leaving the temple for the last time: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38). Paul in Rome made one final attempt to gain Israel. Hence the care with which he acted. He gets into full sympathy with them, he devotes a whole day to persuasion, but when he won only a part it was demonstrated that the end of the Jewish age had come. The vineyard was taken from them and was given to another nation (Matt. xxi. 43).

Rome was to witness the end because it was

representative. In so far it had the character of Jerusalem. The rejection of Jesus in Galilee stood for none but themselves. But when he is rejected in the Jew's capital the nation is involved. Israel had rejected Jesus in every Roman province where his name was preached. But the provinces are not representative. It is when the "chiefs" of the Jews in Rome cannot agree to accept the word of grace that they get the word of doom.

If we compare the substance of this apostolic sentence with former judgments of Paul against the Jews, we shall see that it is final. He had said to the Jews at Antioch that they were unworthy of eternal life. He had said to those in Corinth, "Your blood be upon your own head." But against these Roman Jews he employs the words of Isaiah. They are in their very essence excluding, debarring. And we find this in their connection elsewhere. Jesus used them. Galilee has rejected him. The plot to kill him is formed there (Matt. xii. 14). He has pronounced the word of condemnation against the northern cities. And now come the words of our sentence in justification of no further plain preaching to them. He resorts to the darkening parable (Matt. xiii. 14). Again, months later, Jerusalem repeats the folly of Galilee, and again the words of Isaiah fall (John xii. 40). If Jesus was again offered in Jerusalem it was under the new order of things, when he was now enthroned and his Spirit had come. Paul, in discussing the rejection

of Israel in the epistle to the Roman church (xi. 8), has substantially these same words. And now that the apostle directs them against his auditors in Rome we may be sure they were final for Israel.

That which Paul deduces (v. 28) from this sentence has, of course, a significance which did not belong to it when used, as substantially it has been, before. He declared in Antioch in Pisidia that he would turn to the Gentiles (xiii. 46). But when he says now that "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles," he means that this is irrevocable. For it is added here: "They will hear it."

The twenty-ninth verse is not an approved reading. Meyer pleads for it, but without giving very good reasons for retaining it in the text. It may be imagined, however, that it accurately describes the state of things among the Jews when they departed from him who had made them as a people the last offer of salvation.

Luke's work is done. He has shown how the Jew lost the honor of being the leader of the Lord's worship in the world, and how another holy nation was formed on which that honor was conferred. But he adds one note about Paul. He dwelt in his own hired house, received all who came, and preached without hindrance. This is substantially the condition of God's church to-day. It controls its own house of worship, whose doors are open to all who come, and in all the world the gospel of the grace of God can be preached "with all con-

fidence, no man forbidding." And this present condition of things began where Luke leaves Paul the master of his own house.

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